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A HOME WEEKLY FOR WINTER NIGHTS AND SUMMER DAYS.

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JACK RABBIT, THE PRAIRIE SPORT; OR, THE WOLF CHILDREN OF THE LLANO ESTACADO.

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PROLOGUE.

WHAT THE NIGHT-BIRD SAW.

"To-whit, to-whoo—hoo—hoo—oo."
A dark, shadowy figure was silently, cautiously making its way through the luxuriant undergrowth, when the first notes of the ill-omened bird broke upon his ear, and his keen eye immediately rested upon the ruffled mass of feathers as, with head depressed and tail elevated, it croaked forth the lugubrious notes.

One tinged with superstition would have read an evil omen in this incident; but not so this man. Instead, a low, mellow laugh answered the bird as he passed on.

The owl left its perch and flew on heavy yet noiseless wing before the midnight prowler, repeating its warning note.

The dark outlines of a building uprose before the man. Pausing, he uttered a low, peculiar whistle. As though in reply, the night-bird flapped its wings and crooned forth its lengthened note from the overhanging bough. The man started and shrunk back, but then, with a low, glad cry, he sprang forward as a light, graceful figure appeared in the belt of bright moonlight surrounding the old tree.

"My jewel!" he murmured, as his strong arms wound around the yielding form and pressed it passionately to his breast. "At last—at last!"

With ruffled feathers, with head cocked knowingly, the night-bird looked down upon the lovers with its round, staring eyes. The downy plumage is suddenly ruffled, the broad tail slowly spreads as it arises, the ball-like head goes down; but the lugubrious cry is checked. The bird straightens up, its feathers lie close, it more nearly resembles a hawk ready for speedy flight.

What has alarmed it? Yonder dark, stealthy, creeping shadow? And yet—shadows seldom carry bright weapons for the moon's beams to glint from, nor do bushes rustle, twigs crackle, the ground echo beneath the tread of shadowy, bodiless phantoms.

With a warning cry the night-bird leaves its perch and sails heavily above the lovers. The maiden shrinks back, with a little cry; the lover draws her to him, and once more their lips meet.

The bushes part. The weapon-bearing shadows dart forth. With a shriek, the white-robed maiden flees, even as her lover is stricken to the earth. The owl hoots; the silvery queen of night veils her face beneath a sable cloud.

The spot that had seemed sacred to love's whispers, now resounds with fierce oaths and curses; with the clashing of steel, the sharp detonation of firearms; the heavy, sickening thud-thud of vengeful blows alighting upon human flesh. And again comes that lugubrious cry.

Frightened, the night-bird sails heavily away. Over the shrubbery so thick and tangled; over the high, massive adobe wall that surrounds the garden, finally settling upon a bushy tree near the edge of the chaparral. Had instinct guided it?

Trampling heavily, four men came slowly through the night, dragging between them what seemed a dead or dying man. They paused close beside the tree—beneath the ruins of what had once been the pride of that stunted forest, now a gaunt, leafless, lightning-scarred skeleton.

The night-bird bent its eyes knowingly upon the scene.

The lover lay, bound and helpless, at the feet of his enemies. One of them spoke—cold, contemptuous, yet biting words. Words that told of man's duplicity and woman's treachery. Then he bowed over the prisoner. As he arose, the moon shone forth with increased splendor.

Blood was flowing from the captive's head. The tall, dark man was pinning something to the lightning-scarred tree-trunk.

They were human ears!

As though frightened by the scent of human blood, the night-bird flapped its wings and sailed away, its ominous cry growing fainter and less distinct.

The moon sailed on. The insects chirped and trilled. The owl occasionally sounded its note while sailing over the chaparral, gradually nearing the dead tree. Noiselessly parting the air, the ominous bird rolled its staring eyes round the spot. The ground was free—the intruders had gone.

Then it slowly settled down. Not upon the dead bough, but upon something that swayed to and fro, suspended from the sturdy limb, uttering its melancholy dirge:

"To-whit, to-whoo—hoo—hoo—oo—o!"



"Back-dare to touch my sister and I'll shoot you like a coyote!" he said, in a low, stern voice.

CHAPTER I.

WILD SCENES IN THE DESERT.

"It's bad manners ye show, old man Tony, interrupting a gentleman when he's dining—and that after a good forty-mile ride, too."

The voice was a rich, clear one, though slightly drawling, and the speaker raised his head with a reproachful glance of his big, black eyes, then resumed a manful struggle with the chunk of tough jerked meat, though still watching his comrade, who made a series of quick gestures.

"So—a dust-cloud; coming this way; lance points—that means red-skins, then, for devil a Greaser ever had pluck enough to carry lance so far from their holes!" and the mustached lips curled with scorn. "Well, old man Tony, you look to the horses—ugh! this forage 's tough as buffalo-horn! But I've tackled it, and won't give in beat though all the red-skins 'twixt this and t'other place—you understand, old man Tony?"

The worthy thus addressed made no reply, but strode a few paces further on, where two horses were daintily nibbling the rich, short grass growing around the little pond, fed by the spring beside which the speaker half reclined. Drawing the slackened girths a few inches higher and slipping the dangling bits between the ready jaws were all the preparations required. Then the man strode back to his former look-out, at the edge of the desert island.

For miles upon every side, the hard, arid desert extended, level nearly as a barn-floor. Here and there might be seen a low ridge of sand or an occasional clump of the many-thorned acaci. But these features were unheeded by the tall man.

Far distant, almost upon the horizon line, was the telltale dust-cloud, now larger, more clearly defined; yet only an unusually keen eye could have distinguished it from the dancing, dazzling refraction of the sun's rays upon the blazing sands, much less have declared that the cloud was made by horsemen, who bore lances.

The watcher knew that the party were heading direct for the desert island; the only water-hole for dozens of miles around. His shaggy brows lowered, a look, dark and forbidding, came over his bronzed features; a look, not of fear, but of hatred the most intense.

"'Tis no sweetheart you're watching, that's plain, old man Tony," laughed his comrade, as he came up. "Wonder would those sweet-scented ducks be in quite so much of a hurry

if they knew who was waiting for them? You think they're your old friends, Tony?"

The old man's eyes glared like living coals as he turned, first pointing to his mouth, then shaking his short, heavy rifle with an air that could not be mistaken.

"Whew!" whistled the young man, rubbing his curly poll dubiously. "That's your lay-out, is it? You carry the thing high enough, that's sure! If one, there's fifty bucks in that crowd. I like you as well as the next man, but just now I'd rather be true to my name—Jack Rabbit—in other words, run—puckachee."

Tony did not speak, but made a few rapid gestures, which the young man—who had claimed the whimsical name of Jack Rabbit—apparently had no difficulty in comprehending. "All right, old man Tony, since you put it that way. I'm always lazy after dinner, but since you're determined to get your head broke, I'll see you through."

Squatting side by side, just within cover of the stunted trees, the two men coolly awaited the approach of the enemy, though the long odds might well have caused them uneasiness. A strangely-matched couple were they, resembling each other in only one respect—dauntless courage; many would call it utter recklessness. Yet strong and peculiar ties bound them together.

Anthony Chew was a fair specimen of what the Western "hog-meat and hominy" can produce. Rising six feet, his sturdy frame was a well-shaped mass of bone and muscle, strengthened and hardened by long years of wild life—not wild in the one sense of dissipation. Whisky had never dimmed his eye, clouded his brain, nor weakened his muscle, though for nearly half a century he had lived upon or beyond the borders of civilization. At sixty years of age he was just in his prime. His features were good, what could be seen of them through the long, flowing beard, and hair of almost snowy whiteness. But for many a long year a smile had never been seen upon his face, and a dark, stern look, almost forbidding, had become habitual to him.

Jack Rabbit was but little above the average height, though his rounded limbs, his deep chest, thin flanks, and small waist gave token of unusual strength, combined with an activity not incompatible with his name, or *sobriquet*, whichever it might be.

His face was handsome as his figure was comely. Large eyes, lustrous and sparkling as those of a deer; a healthy brown and red complexion; a silky mustache shading his red, arched lips; a shock of curly black hair

showing beneath his broad-brimmed, gold-banded sombrero. A light jacket of blue broadcloth, ornamented with gold lace and silver buttons; a silken shirt, richly embroidered and frilled; softly-tanned buck-skin nether garments, meeting hairy leggings above beaded moccasins. The *beau ideal* of a prairie dandy.

His arms in every respect resembled those of the old man. A heavy, single-barreled rifle, muzzle-loading, of course; the nature of this rifle would have required a pack-mule for the transportation of metal cartridges. Each man carried two heavy Colt's revolvers, navy pattern; and in their breasts might have been found extra cylinders, all ready for substitution in case of need.

"They're coming up lively, old man Tony," said Jack Rabbit, after a few minutes of silent watching. "They're not on our trail, so they must have left water in the night. Their animals won't be checked easily when they fairly scent the drink, however bad the copper-skinned weaken. We'll have to work lively, or good-by to the trail you've been so anxious about."

Nearer and nearer came the party of savages, until at length the comrades could easily distinguish the riders and their mounts. The mustangs, covered with sweat and dust, bore plain traces of long and hard riding, straggling along in twos and threes, according to their speed or endurance, scenting the life-giving water with distended nostrils. Jack Rabbit had spoken truly. Death alone could check a charge like this.

Nearer and nearer—until Tony uttered a low, hissing sound, and the two rifles were lowered. An instant later came the double reports, sounding like a single one. Through the thin veil of smoke they could note the result of their fire, as they rapidly reloaded.

With the wild, horrible yell that almost invariably accompanies the death throes of an Indian, the leading brave flung aloft his arms and fell headlong from his horse. His nearest comrade dropped heavily upon his mustang's neck, blood gushing from his parched lips and almost smothering the death shriek.

With yells of astonishment and terror, the savages plucked sharply at the jaw-breaking mamelukes, and hastily grasped their weapons. Yet, as Jack Rabbit had foreseen, the thirst-maddened animals plunged blindly forward, entirely beyond control of their masters.

With wonderful rapidity the rifles were reloaded and capped, then, once again, the unerring eyes glanced through the double sights, marking two more red-skins for death.

The same instant Jack Rabbit uttered a shrill whistle. A joyous neigh promptly responded, and crashing through the undergrowth, two horses bounded to their masters' sides. Slinging his rifle on the cantle, Jack Rabbit leaped into the saddle, crying sharply:

"Mount, old man—mount, or they'll ride over us! Don't throw away your life and mine, too!"

It may well be doubted whether any other appeal would have been heeded, for the demon of vengeance was fully aroused in the old hunter's breast. His eyes glared like living coals, his beard was flecked with froth, and a hoarse, snarling sound came from the depths of his chest. Only the deep, intense love which he felt for his protégé could have drawn him from the feast of blood, even though he knew that longer stay could be little less than certain death.

"Mount, Tony—mount, or I swear I'll run a muck bare-handed with the whole caboodle out there! That's the ticket! Give 'em a taste of revolver-soup—hurrah!"

Giving his blood-bay free rein, guiding him only with his knees, Jack Rabbit dashed out into the open ground, discharging shot after shot in rapid succession, sending each leaden pellet home with an unerring certainty that was fairly marvelous. Few men are they who can send bullet after bullet to its flying target from horse-back, but Jack Rabbit had found a rare teacher in big Tony Chew, and, as will presently be shown, the wild life they had followed for years had given them plenty of practice.

The deep, snarling sound growing into a hoarse roar, Tony Chew turned his big buck-skin horse directly toward the yelling, confused savages, a revolver in either hand, and would have charged into their midst, only for the prompt interference of Jack Rabbit, who seized the loose rein and bore the madman to one side. As though unconscious of this, Chew plied his revolvers in quick succession, until the dull click told that the cylinders were empty.

The sudden and deadly attack had utterly demoralized the Indians, and when the two horsemen burst out from the motte, they swerved and struggled furiously with their thirst-frenzied animals. But to retreat was beyond their power. And then, as no more shots came from the island, as no more horsemen made their appearance, the humiliating truth forced itself upon their minds.

Then, not until they realized that they had been bearded by two men, they bethought themselves of their weapons, and two or three escopette balls whistled by the prairie riders, a dozen arrows hissed through the air; then the horses and riders disappeared, plunging into the motte.

Laughing loudly, Jack Rabbit tossed his head back as a flint-headed arrow tore through the flying curls beside his ear, and still holding the bridle of his comrade's horse he wheeled swiftly around the timber island, just without arrow-shot.

"They know now who's playing with them, old man Tony, and their proud stomachs'll turn against letting us get off after scaring them so thoroughly. They'll be after us the very moment they can get their ponies away from the water. As though a hop-toad could catch an antelope! You want fun—well, we'll have it, if you'll only promise not to be such a contrary, headstrong—you understand? I don't want to hurt your feelings, but if anybody else'd act as *you* did, just then, I'd swear he was a thoroughbred fool—so there!"

Chew wiped the froth from his beard, and made a few rapid signs, which were readily interpreted by Jack.

"Good enough! then I'll load up. It's likely we'll need to burn more powder, unless you've got your fill?"

A look of intense hatred passed over the giant's face, and a harsh, guttural sound came from his throat.

"All right; fight it is, then. And not so much fight, either. We can choose our own distance, and if they're fools enough to follow us, we can pick 'em off one by one. Ha! look yonder! Some of the imps are in a hurry to reach their happy hunting-grounds—so! There goes one, by lightning express!" and a reckless laugh parted the young man's lips as he flung forward his rifle and fired at a savage who had just sauntered beyond the friendly cover.

Hard hit, if not killed, the Indian fell back and was quickly drawn under cover. A series of angry yells went up from the motte, and a moment later the two men could see that some movement was about to take place.

"Ready, old man," sharply spoke Jack Rabbit, as he rammed a bullet home and quickly recapped his rifle. "I do believe they're going to make a charge for it. Just keep beyond the first rush, and all's right. They can't follow us far on this waterlogged craft."

First came the loud, lumbering report of the escopettes, or sort of shortened muskets, carrying a heavy ball; and then, with furious yell, the red-skins charged from the island, urging their ponies with voice and heel, holding their bows ready bended. But at the same moment the two riflemen darted away, and the clear, taunting laugh of Jack Rabbit came floating back to the angry ears of the enemy.

With their horses only in a hand-gallop, the adventurers maintained their distance. As the young plainsman had foreseen, the ponies ran heavily, having drank too much water, despite the efforts of their masters to keep them in trim for a chase.

"Old man," abruptly said Jack Rabbit, "seems to me we're acting the parts of cowards, rather than men. The train can't be many miles ahead, and we're leading these brutes direct for it."

As he spoke, Jack Rabbit pointed before him. Deeply imprinted in the sand was the broad, unmistakable trail of a wagon-train; and yet it would have looked oddly enough to northern eyes. The tracks of the wheels were over a foot in width, uneven and irregular, forming a trail that could be followed through the darkest of nights, by the sense of touch alone. The trail led direct from the timber island, where the party had evidently halted. Now, the two men were riding along it, followed by the yelling savages.

Tony Chew made a rapid series of signs, easily interpreted by his young comrade. Their purport was: if left to themselves, now, the Comanches would undoubtedly follow the broad trail and seek revenge for their losses upon the travelers. Tony proposed to draw them so far from the trail that the party would have time to reach their intended camping-grounds, and so be better prepared for what might follow.

"Your head's level, old man," laughed Jack, as he turned in his saddle to select a mark.

Rightly divining his intention, the savages disappeared behind their ponies, hanging by a foot and a hand. The plainsman laughed, recklessly, as his rifle spoke sharply and a horse and rider fell heavily to the ground.

"Go and do likewise, daddy. A Comanche on foot is like a horse without its sting. Give them a salute and then sheer off to the right. I reckon 'twill make 'em mad enough to leave the big trail."

His last words were drowned by the report of the big scout's rifle, and a horrible death-shriek came to their ears as a dying savage plunged headlong from his seat, caught by the leaden missile before he could entirely cover himself.

"It works—it works!" muttered Jack, exultantly, as he saw the entire party heading direct for them, leaving the wagon trail behind them rapidly. "They're letting out a fresh link, too. Those little brutes are tough as sole-leather."

The speed of the pursuers was indeed increasing, strange as it may appear. In fact the Comanches had hurried their ponies away from the water-hole before their thirst was half quenched, so that instead of being "water-logged," the mustangs, desert born and bred, were gaining strength and courage with every stride. Thus swifter and swifter sped the chase over the blazing desert sands.

Jack Rabbit laughed again as he glanced back. A dozen savages had forged far ahead of their comrades. He believed that the draught of cold water was doing its work. But Tony Chew shook his head slowly, and his nimble fingers told a different story. The silent speech was something like this:

"You see, they've cut us off from the trail. To get back into it, we'd have to run the gantlet. Look again. The main body is pressing along the wagon-trail, leaving these dozen bucks to attend to us."

An evil light filled Jack Rabbit's eyes as he saw how adroitly they had been overreached; but it was too late now to act otherwise. Still, hoping to distance their pursuers at least enough to admit of their regaining the wagon-trail by a detour, the two men urged on their animals at full speed.

With dogged perseverance, the Comanches stuck to the chase, though losing ground at every stride. Still, in a long race, a mustang will run down the best blooded horse that ever wore the pig-skin, and the fugitives had already traversed nearly sixty miles of sandy waste since sunrise.

An uneasy light began to fill the old man's eyes, and his nostrils dilated as he rose in his stirrups and cast a keen, sweeping glance before him. At the same moment a wild yell of exultation burst from the Comanches, and they could be seen to ply their plaited whips with redoubled energy.

"What's in the wind now?" sharply demanded Jack Rabbit.

Tony made no reply, but as they thundered on, he shortened his rein, peering keenly forward. The Comanches, riding two and two, now began to spread out upon either hand. A faint line before the fugitives grew rapidly plainer and more distinct. And then the real danger burst upon them.

A wide, deep barranca yawned before them, its sides and bottom marked by sharp, jagged boulders. And the exultant savages came yelling on.

CHAPTER II. A DUEL A LA MORT.

The two plainsmen sharply drew rein. Before them lay the barranca, a chasm over a hundred feet in depth, the sides precipitous and impracticable, the width far too great for mortal horse to leap across. Behind them came the exultant, screeching savages, flogging their jaded beasts to increased speed, holding their weapons ready for use the instant they should draw within range.

"Those fools think they've got the dead-wood on us now," laughed Jack Rabbit, carelessly. "Wonder if they ever saw men fight before?"

Old man Tony used his fingers rapidly. He said that while there was but little doubt that they two, with their revolvers, would be more than a match for the Comanche's bows and arrows, yet he would rather have more room to maneuver in; that in the *melee* one or both of their horses might be killed or disabled, and to be left afout in the desert would be equivalent to death. Let Jack Rabbit follow him closely, watch his every motion, and imitate him in every respect.

Turning his big yellow horse to the left, Tony Chew raced swiftly along the edge of the canon, closely followed by Jack Rabbit, whose rifle was threatening the foremost Indians.

The Comanches were already within long rifle range, and the two parties were steadily

drawing nearer each other, following the lines of an angle which would meet at a point some two miles ahead, if nothing prevented.

As the range gradually lessened, the Comanches, at every motion of the young man's rifle, would duck down behind the bodies of their laboring ponies. But Jack held his fire. He dared not risk wasting a shot now.

Then a harsh, inarticulate cry from the big borderer arrested his attention, and as he interpreted the rapid sign, a reckless smile chased the dark scowl from his face. He saw now what Chew had been working for, and felt that the game lay in their own hands.

With a shrill yell he whirled his blood bay, and swiftly thundered down upon the nearest Comanches, closely followed by the white-haired giant. Taken by surprise, strung out in a long line, the Comanches moved aside as though about to leave the way clear for the two men; but such was not the case.

The movement was simply to combine their forces, and they were quickly formed in two bodies, between which the fugitives must pass or else check their charge.

"Now, old man Tony," said Jack Rabbit, when they were almost within pistol range of the enemy, "I'll keep 'em in play, while you show the way over. Keep in a straight line beyond, so that I won't make a blunder."

Without a moment's hesitation the white-haired giant wheeled his horse and galloped swiftly back toward the barranca, holding the reins tight drawn, glaring keenly ahead.

A wild yell broke from the Comanches at this unexpected movement, and as with one accord they brandished their weapons and urged their ponies forward. The young man's bold defiance, Jack Rabbit leveled his revolver and opened a rapid fusillade upon the charging savages.

Though only one brave fell, badly wounded, the swiftly-recurring shots served to check the Comanches. Sinking from view behind their mustangs' bodies, they separated with the evident intention of cutting off the young plainsman from rejoining his comrade.

A swift glance showed Jack the figure of the big horse and rider cutting through the air like a bird, and he knew that the way was open for his retreat, and none too soon, either. The Comanches were rapidly lessening his slight advantage. Ten seconds later would have been fatal to his hopes.

Despite the imminent peril, the young man's natural recklessness displayed itself in a clear, ringing laugh, as he touched his bay with the spurs, and dashed direct for the canon, as though intent upon committing suicide.

As yet the chasm was concealed from him, but beyond it he saw the big borderer eagerly motioning him on, and knew that he was heading aright. Upon each side the Comanches were rapidly drawing nearer, and already their arrows began to hurtle through the air, cutting all around the fugitive. For himself he cared little, but in case even a single arrow should strike his horse, then good-bye to his hopes. He knew that the leap before him would be a severe test of the blood-bay's powers at best; wounded, 'twould become an impossibility.

He did not attempt to clear the way with his revolver, for he knew that his jaded horse would need all his aid in making the leap. So, with clenched teeth and stifled breath he dashed on—on, until the chasm yawned almost beneath his feet, while the arrows whistled viciously around his form.

With a shrill yell he plunged spurs rowel deep into the steaming sides of the blood-bay, and lifting him up by the reins, he shot through the air like a bird.

An angry yell broke from the Comanches as they saw their anticipated victim dwell for a moment over the frightful depth, then strike fair and lightly upon the other side of the barranca, plunging along for a few yards, then drawing up safe and sound beside the big borderer.

The very moment he felt assured Jack Rabbit knew the exact point at which to take his leap, Tony Chew spurred aside and urged his horse up to the very brink of the chasm, snatching his rifle from the high pommel.

Like a bird Jack Rabbit shot past, the yelling Comanches close upon his heels. The white-haired giant coolly selected his target and fired. Death-cries, the foremost savages fell headlong to the blood-stained sands. Again uttering that horrid, indescribable sound, the big borderer dropped his rifle across his thighs, drawing a revolver, and sending bullet after bullet into the confused mass of men and beasts, as the two parties met. Still, despite the fact that another of their number fell disabled, the Comanches seemed bent on forcing a passage, and, doubtless, would have succeeded had not Jack Rabbit hastened to the assistance of his comrade. Then, under the rapid fusillade, the red-skins hastily retreated until at a reasonably safe distance.

"We've got the dead-wood on 'em this time, old man," laughed Jack Rabbit, as he brushed the matted dust and perspiration from his brow. "They'll give us a breathing-spell just now, and so, while I'm loading up, you doctor my hump-ribs a bit. 'Twas a young hand sent that—afraid of losing the chance if he waited to pull the arrow to the head—or I'd have got more than a *horns-bite*."

In truth a feathered shaft was quivering in the young borderer's back, just beneath the left shoulder blade, received while he was hanging in mid-air above the chasm. With an anxious look Tony hastened to examine the wound, his hands trembling far more than when he was facing the savage war-party. But, as Jack Rabbit had said, the wound was little more than skin deep; the arrow had been sent with little force.

Their next move was to carefully inspect the condition of their horses. To their great satisfaction, neither had been touched by the flying arrows, nor had the long race, ending as it had in an uncommon leap for prairie horses, had any other effect than to jade them a little.

"They're ready for a fifty-mile race this minute," cried the enthusiastic Jack Rabbit, as he caressed his loved bay. "But what 're those imps up to now?"

When the Comanches retreated before the leaden hailstorm, they gathered together as if for consultation, evidently determined to make another attempt to revenge their fellow bretheren. When Jack made his remark, they had plainly arrived at some conclusion; nor did they waste time in carrying it out.

Their number had been reduced to eleven. Of these, six remained stationary, though still mounted, directly opposite the point where the borderers had leaped the barranca. The other five, after looking carefully to their bows and arrows, set their horses in motion, speeding toward the barranca, but in a line that would strike it some hundred yards above our friends.

"They know of another crossing!" exclaimed Jack, with an inquiring glance at the white-haired giant.

Chew's nimble fingers swiftly replied: that this point was the only one for miles in either

direction narrow enough for mortal horses to cross. By going around, the Comanches could not reach them under twelve hours, at the very least.

"Look! they mean business, sure enough!" cried the young man, as his ready wit divined the plan of the horsemen. "Here—take the horses back yonder—out of bow-shot; give 'em the sign to stay where put."

As he spoke, Jack Rabbit leaped to the ground, and running close to the barranca, flung himself at full length in a slight depression of the sand. Tony Chew obeyed without a sign, trotting rapidly away from the spot.

Stripped to the skin, save for their scanty breechclouts, laying aside their robes, their lances, everything except their bows and arrows, the five Indians now began their portion of the work. One brave set his mustang in motion, galloping along the edge of the barranca, increasing his speed with every stride.

When within short range of the prostrate adventurer, he sunk quickly behind the body of his horse, and then, as he darted swiftly, sent a brace of arrows whistling viciously over the chasm. Close upon his heels came a second brave, then another and another, each delivering their arrows as they swept by, then swooping around in order to regain their starting point.

Jack Rabbit glanced anxiously over his shoulder, without attempting to return the shots. He saw that the intention was to kill or disable the two horses, as the surest way of securing the pale-faces. But Tony had not been idle, and the feathered shafts all fell short.

Leaving the animals, the giant borderer hastened back and took up his position to the right of his comrade, just as the Comanches were about to make their second charge.

"Pick off their ponies, or they'll keep it up until one of us is pinked, then those other dogs will make a charge for the leap," muttered Jack, as the leading Comanche spurred along.

Crack—crack! In swift succession the two rifles spoke, and held by hands that were well nigh unerring, the two foremost riders went down in a confused heap with their stricken ponies. The following braves, aghast, veered suddenly aside, uttering yells of rage and dismay.

"Now's our time!" cried Jack Rabbit, his eyes flashing, as he uttered a shrill whistle. "What's the use in fooling when one charge will end it all?"

The well-trained horses promptly obeyed the signal, and mounting, Jack Rabbit rushed at the leap, carrying his blood bay over the chasm as cleverly as before, then, drawing his faithful revolver, he thundered down upon the astonished savages, who could scarce believe their senses.

The immense stride of the yellow horse quickly carried him alongside the lighter limbed bay, and then, through a cloud of hastily aimed arrows, the comrades met the Comanches hand to hand.

The rapid detonations of the revolvers, the clatter of the long lances, the thud of hoof-strokes upon the sand, the shrill yells answered by the reckless laugh of Jack Rabbit and the deep growl of the white-haired giant, mingled with the death shriek, the cries and groans of the dying.

Truly it was a duel to the death!

CHAPTER III. THE BUFFALO HUNTERS.

A CHORUS of truly diabolical sounds filled the air. It seemed as though a score of persons, each with a different toned voice, were shrieking aloud in bitter agony, never pausing for breath, even for a moment.

Such sounds coming to the ears of a traveler in that wild and desolate region known as the Llano Estacado—that vast tract of land claimed by no man, yet which is often baptized in blood, whenever the rival tribes of prairie Indians meet within its limits—such sounds would naturally be interpreted as the signals of another dread tragedy. But the rays of the afternoon sun would quickly dissipate such ideas.

A wagon-train was slowly toiling its way across the dry, sandy waste, heading for the now not distant line of broken, rugged rock hills, thinly covered with cedar and other evergreens. A wagon-train, yet not one familiar to northern eyes. The one in question is curious enough to repay a closer inspection.

The train proper was composed of fourteen carts, or technically speaking, *carretas*, each drawn by two yoke of oxen. A description of one, comprises all. The wheels, two in number, are merely rude blocks of wood, cut from the butt of a cottonwood tree, without the slightest attempt at rounding them, other than peeling off the bark, and were from thirty to thirty-six inches in diameter, a foot or more in thickness. In some cases a strip of raw hide had been tacked on as a tire. The wheels, usually nearer square or oval than round, are joined by a stout wooden axle. A long tongue leads out from the axle-tree, a stout bar of wood being lashed to its smaller end. This is again lashed to the *horns* of the wheel oxen. A deep, square box is secured upon the axle and tongue. When once the clumsy machine is fairly in motion, the noise made by the wooden axles, guiltless of grease, is beyond all description, and has only one equal—a troop of howling monkeys while testing their throats to the utmost.

Besides these primitive carts, there are a number of pack mules, some heavily loaded, others bearing a woman or two or three children. Each team has a driver. Besides, one can distinguish a number of men, some afoot, others upon horseback. All in all, the human souls number full two score.

Who are they? The answer is brief. They are the BUFFALO HUNTERS. A few words concerning this peculiar people, then for rapid action and brief delays.

For over a century these buffalo-hunters (*ciboleros*) have been a separate and distinct race, the business generally descending from father to son, generation after generation, though occasionally one more enterprising would make a fortune and end his days as a *rico*. These men were to the frontier of Mexico pretty much what the trapper and pioneer have been to the Anglo-American settlements. The outfit of the buffalo hunter is widely different from that required by his northern prototype. Of fire-arms he knows little and cares less—as a rule. A short, tough bow with a quiver full of keen, steel-headed arrows; a long lance; a stout knife and a lasso. A well-trained horse is essential, and many a ragged, greasy *cibolero* has been seen astride an animal well-nigh worth its weight in gold, when not a *claco* could be found in his pockets.

The buffalo-hunter is also a trader—in fact, this is his main dependence. The Comanches, Apaches, Pawnees, and other tribes know their object in venturing so far beyond the limits of civilization, and as a general thing,

encourage the traders to come among them. Yet, through a wanton love of displaying their power, the savages but too frequently do all the trading themselves, cheating and abusing the adventurers, sometimes ending all disputes by a massacre. Still, these lessons are soon forgotten, and the *ciboleros* risk their lives, their little all, again and again. Sometimes a large company of these traders combine their stock, taking with them their wives and families, until, only for the horrible shrieking carretas, they might be mistaken for a migrating Indian tribe.

The trading stock of the *cibolero* is very limited. Some sacks of coarse bread, which most prairie Indians consider a delicious luxury; a quantity of *pinole* (parched corn, ground and mixed with water and sugar); a few baubles of glass and brass; some coarse, high-colored blankets and cloths, and a few Spanish knives with their painted triangular blades.

Such is—or rather was, for the race is almost extinct—the *cibolero* of New Mexico, and his equipage and following.

A tall, dark-bearded man, fine looking, even through the thick covering of tan and dust, was urging his driver to hasten the progress of the train, when a rider spurred to his side and spoke a few hasty words:

"Father, we are not alone. Look—a dust cloud!"

"I know, Rosina; my eyes are open. I saw the sign a mile back, and for that reason I am hurrying up the train to reach the rocks before—"

"There is danger, then?"

"There is always danger when one's eyes are closed. We are in a bad part of the desert. It is here that the Mad Chief, as they call him, rides often. But rest easy. We are strong and well armed. Even if yonder party be his following, there is little to fear. We will clip his wings and rid the desert of a foul scourge. Only—I would rather we were at the rocks, yonder."

Father and daughter rode on side by side in silence, though with many a backward glance. Don Felipe Raymon was a devout believer in signs and omens, and had not forgotten his evil dream of the past night. Only for that dream he would have welcomed that dust cloud as token of an advantageous trade.

Though scenting water, the jaded oxen toiled slowly and wearily on with their loads, the clumsy carts creaking in horrible concert with the loud cracking whips and voluble curses of the dark-skinned drivers. The friendly rocks grew nearer, but so did the desert cloud, and ere long Don Raymon realized the utter folly of continuing such a race. To keep on would only expose his fear, and none knew better than he how prone even the most friendly Indians were to take advantage of such a weakness.

He gave the signal to halt, and then for the women and children to keep close to the middle carts, while the men, thoroughly armed, stood around ready either for peaceful trade or warlike blows.

"They're Comanches, senior," respectfully ventured a little grizzled *cibolero*. "You can see their long hair."

The Comanches do not shave any portion of their heads, merely braiding the scalp-lock, allowing the long lock to float freely down their shoulders. Some of them even splice the hair, using that cut from the heads of captives for the purpose.

"Rather than those cursed Pawnees, under that devil, the Mad Chief, eh, Pepe?" smiled Don Raymon.

"They say he has horns and a forked tail—holy mother, protect us!" muttered Pepe, crossing himself.

The Indian party was now distinctly visible and their number could almost be counted. They came on at a steady gallop, though their animals gave unmistakable signs of a long, arduous journey, for the frequently-applied thongs of cowhide could not quicken their pace in the least.

"Bid the men keep on guard, Pepe," muttered the leader, an anxious light in his eye. "The heretics do not act natural. They seem in deadly earnest."

Contrary to their habitual customs of greeting a party of friends with a display of horsemanship and *fartarronade*, the Comanches galloped up in silence, the party dividing, one half passing round the train as if to cut off its further retreat, while the other portion, under lead of a tall, heavily-bearded man, drew rein within short arrow-shot of the wagons.

Don Raymon immediately rode forward a few yards, making a signal of peace, which was responded to by the bearded man, who urged his panting mustang forward.

"You are the chief of this party?" he demanded, in fair enough Spanish, with a keen glance into Raymon's face.

"Yes, senior—and you, if I mistake not, are a countryman of mine?" was the prompt reply.

"No—I am a Comanche chief," fiercely rejoined the renegade. "If I once consorted with dogs and the sons of dogs, I do so no longer, and if you are wise, you will bridle your tongue or it may cause you trouble. Bid your men stand out in full view. Never mind my reasons—I'm not in the most agreeable humor just now, and the less trouble you give us the better it will be for you."

This insolent speech stuck in the Mexican's throat, and it was only by remembering that his dear ones—his wife and children—were so near, that he could choke down his anger. For a moment he was strongly tempted to give the signal for his men to fire, for he saw that his force was fully equal to that of the renegade; but, policy forbade. Even if he were to defeat this party, a single survivor would be enough to bring the entire Comanche tribe down upon him, long before he could escape from the desert.

"There's another one on horseback, who hides his face," sharply added the renegade, pointing to the figure of Rosina, who had covered her face with a corner of her *manga*.

"That is a woman—my daughter."

"Perhaps. Bid her show her face, then," and the renegade pressed forward to where the maiden sat, astride her horse, as is usual with all Mexican women save those of the higher order.

With a sharp, angry cry, a beardless youth of some fifteen summers, pushed his horse before that of Rosina, and threatened the renegade with leveled rifle.

"Back—dare to touch my sister and I'll shoot you like a coyote!" he said, in a low, stern voice.

"Pablo—he will kill you!" cried Rosina, dropping the friendly *manga* and clutching her brother's arm.

The renegade shrunk back from the threatening weapon, but a glow of brutal admiration overspread his rugged features as he caught sight of that almost peerless beautiful face.

"I am satisfied, Senior," he said, turning quickly toward the frowning *cibolero*, whose hand was resting upon a half-drawn knife,

while the other men were pushing forward with scowling looks and muttered threats. "But keep your men at a more respectful distance, and teach this boy better manners. He crows too loud for a young cock."

"He is his father's son, and knows how to avenge an insult," hotly retorted Pablo.

"Peace, my son," said Don Raymon, with a gesture of command. "And now, senior, since I have complied with your request, what is your wish? We are only poor *ciboleros*, come here to hunt the buffalo, and to trade with our friends, the Indians. But it is a rule with us to give as much as we receive, whether in peaceful barter or stout blows."

"Yours is a nimble tongue, at least," sneered the renegade. "But enough. Where are the rest of your company?"

"You have seen them all; there are no others."

"Be careful. I know more than you suspect. There are two men belonging to your company not now present. One is a white-haired giant, the other a young man. They ride large horses, one a buckskin, the other a blood-bay. When and where are they to join you again?"

"I have already said that I know no such persons."

"And lied in saying so. Stop! Touch a weapon or make one false motion, and 'twill be your last act on earth. Look at my braves. They are in a pleasant humor just now. There's blood in their eyes, and a single motion of my hand is enough to make them charge; you can imagine the rest. They are the choicest warriors of the Comanche nation."

"Once more—what do you wish?" impatiently demanded the buffalo-hunter, with difficulty subduing his rising anger.

"That is easy told. Your two friends are our bitter enemies. To-day, as we approached the water-hole—where you halted last night—they fired at us from an ambush, and killed some of my braves. Their horses had been resting; ours were nearly worn out. They fled, like cowards, pursued by a portion of my band. They may escape, their horses are so much fresher; but in any case the blood of the dead must be avenged. Those men must die, though they seek to hide in the center of the earth."

"I know nothing of them. You must settle the matter between yourselves," coldly responded the *cibolero*.

"That answer will not satisfy my braves. They believe that these two men belong to your company, and so do I. They are generous; for when they might easily kill or capture you all, they are satisfied to demand only two bodies as hostages, to be held until you deliver up the real criminals."

"Indeed! And if we refuse?" sneered Raymon.

The renegade uttered a shrill cry. Like magic every bow was bent, an arrow drawn to the head. Another cry caused the weapons to be lowered, almost before the *ciboleros* could realize it at all.

"You see—the answer is plain. There can be no refusal, since a refusal means death. You are helpless. We are able to take far more than what we ask. Be sensible, then, and give up the two hostages."

"If we consent—I say *if*—which ones would you select?" slowly asked Don Raymon, like one wishing to gain time for thought.

"Those who will insure your keeping the compact. I select these two," and the renegade pointed out Rosina and Pablo. "Give them to us, with your solemn pledge, and all will be well."

"Never—a thousand times never!" screamed the enraged father, as he flashed forth a knife.

The renegade bounded back, causing his horse to rear so as to protect his body, and at the same time repeating his cry. Instantly the signal was answered by the terrible Comanche war-whoop!

(To be continued.)

SONG.

BY GEORGE.

Brief and hot were the words we spoke,
Few and cold were the tears we shed,
Then I tore my heart from its anchorage
And away to the battlefields
Away! Away! to the battlefields
Where I fought with a bitter pride;
Men said, "He fights like a tiger bold."
But I envied the man who died!

The years rolled on. Once more I stood
In the shade of the willow tree,
My country safe, my flag redeemed,
But, what was there left for me?
The brook ran on, the sun shone warm,
The birds sang loud and sweet
As when, in the golden days of old,
I lay at my darling's feet.

Can true love die? Is regret a myth?
Is a guilt made from a word,
Then like the stir of autumn leaves
A rustling sound I heard;
Dear heart, 'twas she and one deep look
Retold the story true,
That love, though old as mother earth,
Is yet forever new!

Happy Harry,

THE WILD BOY OF THE WOODS;

OR The Pirates of the Northern Lakes.

BY OLL COOMES.

AUTHOR OF "IDABO TOM," "DAKOTA DAN,"
"BOWIE-KNIFE BEN," "OLD HURRICANE,"
"HAWKEYE HARRY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XIX.—CONTINUED.

This news well-nigh crazed the father. He walked the deck and wept tears of bitterest agony. Margery, too, was almost prostrated by the news, while Captain Rankin seemed inwardly suffering the tortures of death. He sprang from his couch, his feeble body stimulated by the sad tidings, and rushed on deck; but this strength was unnatural—the force of excitement, and he soon sunk under a relapse of the most aggravating nature.

"We must never leave here till we know what has become of her, general," Harry said, after discussing the matter.

"No, no, *never*!" cried the father. "I cannot leave my child, dead or alive, in the hands of the foe!"

One was a very small footprint, and had been made with a moccasined foot. This discovery gave Long Beard cause for alarming apprehensions, and further search served to strengthen his fears. They found other moccasin-tracks in abundance, which proved beyond doubt that a band of savages had been upon the island. Carrying their investigations still further, they found a spot that had been the scene of a deadly conflict. The ground was torn up; there was blood upon the leaves and bushes, and fragments of clothing strewn about.

"There, general, there is the very spot where Belshazzar had his skirmish, and from looks of things they both made the fur fly. Great, hopin' horns! I'll bet it was lively 'bout the time they spun through that thicket what ye can see some slices of Injin and clumps of fur stickin' on the bushes. Bell makes a nasty fight—chaws away without any regard for jugular veins and such machinery. He's a leetle rude and barbarous-like in sich things. He's never had a thorough trainin' on the mode of civilized warfare, therefore he has no choice 'bout doin' up a death for a red-skin. It's my opinion, however, that we'll not find your daughter here, for I think the red varmints have carried her away."

Long Beard groaned in spirit.
"Oh, my poor child! why does God punish me so?" he exclaimed, pressing his throbbing temples.

"You may feel very thankful that the British didn't get her, general. The Indians are ornery bald-faced varmints, but they do most always treat young white gals kindly in their way—especially sich angels as your Temple is. But, there's no telling what them red-mouthed foreigners 'd do."

"I would rather see her die than fall into Kirby Kale's power," groaned the father.
"You know that feller, don't you, Big Beard? you fear his power, don't you?"
"He is a Nemesis to me, Harry."

"A—what?"
"A curse that pursues me, haunts me—the fiend incarnate that made me an exile—a re-cluse—a hunted wretch!"

"Oh, great horns, Big Beard!" exclaimed Harry, sympathetically; "you and me have met off and on nearly two years. We've been like the needle to the pole for each other—right there; and I'm awful sorry to hear this. But, I always thought you'd trouble on your mind; and, general, if Kirby Kale is the cause of that trouble, I can eradicate it as effectually as though Kale had never been born. I'll engage to hoist his hair afore two more moons; I will for a polished fact."

"Do not stain your hands with human blood, Harry, however vile it may be, unless in self-defense or in a just cause."

"Why, wouldn't it be in a just cause to stop Kale's respiration? Ain't he in battle-array against our country? Don't he fly the rag of England? while I throw to the breeze the stars and stripes of ole Hail Columbia Yankee Doodle! I'm an American patriot, general—me and Belshazzar are, and for the cause of our kentry we'll fight till the cows come home. No, no, general; I don't see as it would be wrong for me to put Kirby Kale on the list of royal dead, and henceforth I shall keep an eye open for that foreign Johnny jump-up. But then, we must look further for your Temple—not give up till we know she is gone."

"Yes; let us look further. We may find her dead," said the white-bearded man, sadly. They moved on, searching every step of ground for some evidence of the girl's fate. Carefully they approached the cabin and entered it. It had been plundered of everything worth carrying away, and an attempt had been made to fire the building. They also found that the giant's sail-boat was gone, which left no doubt in their minds but that the enemy had all disappeared from the vicinity, carrying the captive with them.

Happy Harry climbed to the top of the tallest tree on the island, and from this point he could command a tolerable view of the whole group of islands that dotted the lake. The first thing that caught his eyes was a thin column of white smoke rising above the tree-tops on an island a mile or more north of them.

"I see a smoke, general," he exclaimed, "over there on the furthest island."

"Indeed! what does it imply?"

"Well, it's not the smoke of a recent camp-fire, that's plain to be seen. The red varmints that got your gal might have spent the night there and left a smoldering camp-fire, or else Kirby Kale, after turnin' tail on the 'S-out,' might have dropped in there to wait for daylight. I'll bet it's one or t'other, and maybe both. If they are there yet, they will be apt to stay there till night; they'll not venture out as long as the brig, now an American fish, swims around in this vicinity. So I'll keep a watch here, and if I see any change in the color and volume of that smoke about noon or after, I'll know the fire's been replenished, and then as soon as convenient, I'll figure off in that direction. And now, general, I'd suggest, in order to throw them varmints off their guard, if they are watchin' the 'S-out,' that you return to the boat and run south eight or ten leagues, and return durin' the night. That'll give me more chances to figure."

"Harry, my brave boy, I will do as you suggest. I have implicit faith in you and your knowledge of frontier life and skill in circumventing the enemy, therefore I will go at once to the brig."

"Good-by, general!"
"Good-by, and may God bless you."

The giant turned and moved away, leaving the brave little fellow and his faithful dog alone upon the island.

CHAPTER XX. THE JEALOUS PRINCESS.

We will now go back and look after Tempy, whom we left on the island, with no one but Harry's faithful dog to keep her company. It was with no little reluctance that she consented to remain behind, but she knew that both Harry and Lieutenant Reeder acted in the best of faith in leaving her there; so the peerless little maiden was concealed in a clump of branching oaks, Belshazzar at her side. She soon made friendship with the dog by kind words and gentle caresses. He crouched at her feet as if assuming the guardianship of her safety.

Tempy sat down upon the gnarled root of the oak, and leaned her head against the tree. She was tired—almost exhausted. The day's journey and the night's perils had been more than her feeble strength could withstand without wearing upon her. Her physical strength was not equal to her courage. Moreover, she was laboring under a terrible suspense—she was troubled about the fate of her father and sister. Nor was this all that weighed upon her. The face of Captain Rankin, pale and wan, yet handsome in its manly beauty, haunted her young heart like the vision of a dream, and some aching, longing desire filled her breast. She wept over the fate of her

friends, but when her thoughts reverted to the young captain, she choked down emotions that she had never before experienced. Young as she was, love had fettered her innocent, guileless heart, though she was scarcely aware of the fact.

She sat thinking, taking no note of time, nor dreaming of danger, until the dog at her feet started with a low growl. She listened with bated breath. She heard a faint rustle of the bushes near.

The dog growled again.
"Pale-face, pale-face!" suddenly called a soft, feminine voice, evidently that of an Indian speaking English.

Tempy's heart ceased almost to beat, and it was some moments before she could recover sufficiently to reply.

"Who calls?" she finally made out to ask.
"Me—your friend Eeleelah, the Indian girl, the princess of the Ottawas."

"What seeks Eeleelah?" returned Tempy, with an air of relief.

"Her white sister."

"Then come nearer, and tell me why you seek me."

"But your dog growls fierce—he bite Eeleelah."

Tempy spoke to Belshazzar, and he at once became quiet, when, with that characteristic precaution of her race, the Indian maiden crept softly and shyly toward Tempy. As she came nearer, the white girl asked:

"How did the princess know I was here?" She spoke familiarly of the Indian girl, for she was not unknown at the island home.

"I saw you come here in the boat of the Long Knives. I followed you."

"Ah! then it was your boat we saw following us like a tiny speck on the water? But why have you followed me here?"

"Why does the bird seek its mate in the woods?"

"Because it loves the one it seeks, I would think."

"That is why Eeleelah is here."

"Then I am the one sought?"

"No, it is the master of that dog," interrupted the princess; "but I would rather find you a stranger than him," and her voice lowered to a strange whisper.

"I welcome my red sister; I am in trouble. The English have robbed my home."

"That is not as bad as to rob one's heart."

Tempy was surprised at this reply. She knew there was a hidden meaning in the words, but she could not imagine what it could be.

"I do not understand you, Eeleelah," she said.

"My white sister's tongue is crooked, like all the pale-faces but the Wild Boy's. Why is that dog here?"

"His master left him to protect me."

"Then the Wild Boy loves you?"

"I am sure I do not know."

"My white sister knows—she has won his heart—stole it away from Eeleelah," and her voice was tinged with bitter sadness.

Tempy now divined what the girl was aiming at—that a feeling of jealousy rankled in her young heart like a poisoned shaft.

"Eeleelah is mistaken," she said. "I do not love the white boy. I never met him till since the night set in."

"That is long enough to learn to love. Three suns ago a bad white man struck Eeleelah down in the woods because she would not love him. He covered her with leaves and brush where the shadows were deep. He thought the eye of the Great Spirit would not find her there. But he sent the Wild Boy that way, and his dog scented the blood where Eeleelah fell, and led his master to where she lay with a cloud on her brain. But he soon drove it away as the sun in his eyes shone down into Eeleelah's heart and made her love him. And now her white sister would steal that love away."

"I would not, Eeleelah, stand between you and the Wild Boy of the Woods."

"But do you not wait his coming here?"

"I do," replied Tempy.

"You will never see him here," the princess said. Then she began murmuring, as if to herself, growing louder and louder until she broke into a plaintive chant. This she kept up for several moments, to the surprise and terror of Tempy. When she had ceased, foot-steps were heard approaching through the undergrowth.

Belshazzar started up and growled fiercely. Tempy shrunk back and turned to flee, but Eeleelah seized her by the arm and held her fast.

"What do you mean, Eeleelah?" the maiden cried; "release me!"

Eeleelah made no answer. The crashing in the undergrowth came nearer; friends of the princess were approaching. Belshazzar dashed forward and became engaged in a terrible encounter with a savage. Others came on and seized the now terrified Tempy. They were all Ottawas, friends of the jealous Eeleelah.

Tempy shrieked for help, but no friendly ear saved that of Belshazzar heard her. Already the dog had seized an Ottawa by the throat, and together they rolled upon the earth. The contest would have been of short duration between the animal and warrior had not others come to the assistance of their dying friend. Two of them threw themselves upon the dog, and in deadly contest whirled and crashed through the undergrowth in rapid evolutions. The struggle had lasted for some moments when the dog managed to elude the grasp of his enemies and escaped in the darkness, as if conscious of his inability to cope with such overwhelming numbers.

Tempy was carried away across the island. Stopping at the cabin, the savages plundered it of everything that would be of use to them. Then they fired the building and hurried to their boats, expecting to be far away ere the blazing cabin lit up the surrounding gloom. To their disappointment, however, the fire went out, and surmising that it had been extinguished by enemies who were upon the island, they pushed westward among the islands.

Tempy sat in the boat, weeping bitterly. So suddenly had the blow fallen upon her that she could scarcely realize the terrible truth. To Eeleelah she attributed all her trouble. The girl's jealousy had made her treacherous and merciless. She would listen to no reason nor truth from the lips of the innocent girl.

The Indians were all young warriors, and seemed not only willing, but anxious to obey the mandates of the fair princess. By her direction they paddled along through the islands, and finally landed upon one of the largest of the group—for what purpose we will see.

CHAPTER XXI. WHO SHOT HARRY?

It required but a few minutes for the savages to effect a landing, remove their booty and fair little captive ashore and beach their boat. This done, they advanced to the interior of the island, and selecting a little opening in the dense woods, went into camp. Out

of the bed-clothing taken from Tempy's home, a kind of a lodge was constructed for the captive, and Eeleelah, with every sense sharpened by her burning jealousy, constituted herself watch over the prisoner's apartment.

In the heart of the forest, where no breath of air stirred, gnats and musketees and insect-life of annoying nature, gathered in swarms and harassed the warriors until it became necessary to strike a fire or smudge to drive the pestiferous insects away. Surrounded on all sides, as they were, by dense vegetation, the warriors had no fear of the light betraying them. The usual precautions, however, were not neglected. Guards were posted at points where enemies were most likely to approach, and after a short deliberation over their pipes, most of the band stretched themselves upon the ground and slept. The sentinels were relieved at intervals, so that each performed his share of duty and received his share of rest. There was but one in the party whose eyes were not closed that night—Eeleelah, the princess. She would not be relieved of her watch over Tempy, but sat the whole night through, bolt upright, a living statue of patience and unyielding determination, watching her captive rival as she tossed and moaned in a troubled sleep.

Thus the night wore away.
With the first streaks of dawn every savage was astir. By permission of her relentless guard, Tempy was conducted down to the water's edge, where she made a thorough ablution, which proved quite refreshing to both mind and body.

While here alone, she said to Eeleelah:

"What are you going to do with me, Eeleelah?"

"Take you to the village of the Ottawas."

"Why will you not let me go to my people?"

"Where are your people? where is your home?"

"I know not," Tempy responded, bursting into tears.

"Oh, Eeleelah!" she finally cried, "I know why you keep me a close prisoner. You love the Wild Boy of the Woods, and think I do also—that I stand between you and him. Be at once undressed, Eeleelah; I love another—not Happy Harry—and if you would win and hold his love, take me to my people. He will search for me, and if he finds me the captive of Eeleelah's people, he will hate her. I know the pale-face heart."

"Does the pale-face speak the truth?" she asked.

"I call the Great Spirit to bear witness to what I have said being true," replied Tempy.

"My pale-face sister should have told me this before—when we stood alone upon the island and beneath the shadows of last night; then Eeleelah's heart would not have grown so hard, and she would not have called the warriors that were near."

"Eeleelah's ears were deaf last night with her feelings of revenge, and she would not hear me. But then, it is not too late to free me yet, and then the princess can seek her lover, and I mine."

"The young chief, Gray Fox, is your lover now?" Eeleelah said, affecting regret. "It is too late to free my white sister, for she has become entwined in the heart of the young chief. He will make her his wife when he returns from the war-path."

At this juncture a warrior appeared and requested the immediate return of the maidens to camp, with which request they at once complied.

A fire had been lighted, and a number of wild pigeons, procured in the woods, had been dressed and roasted for their meal. Tempy did not refuse to eat, for the roasted birds were too tempting to her hunger. She ate with relish, and the tender food gave her new strength and new hope.

Since their interview by the water, she noticed that Eeleelah had become somewhat downcast and thoughtful. Tempy's words had painfully impressed her.

Breakfast dispatched, all but five or six warriors entered their boat and pushed off among the islands, evidently on some expedition.

Tempy was consigned to her lodge, and a warrior detailed as guard, for the princess seemed to have lost all desire to perform that duty further.

The day wore slowly on; it was past noon, when the faint report of a rifle on an adjacent island enlisted the attention of the red-skins. As it was not repeated, however, no serious apprehensions arose, and all relaxed into their wonted silence and patient waiting for the return of the expedition.

The afternoon had worn nearly away when the patter of feet suddenly started the encampment. To the surprise of all, a large dog bounded into their midst. It was Belshazzar, the dumb companion of Happy Harry. He stopped, and looking imploringly up into the savages' faces, uttered a low bark, wagged his tail, then, turning, bounded away again into the woods.

The red-skins were awe-stricken by this unexpected movement of the great mastiff. Eeleelah uttered a little cry of surprise, and rose to her feet. For a moment she gazed after the fleeing dog, then started to follow him. But she had scarcely taken a dozen steps ere the dog again appeared in sight. He was walking backward and appeared to be dragging something that taxed his power to its utmost extent.

In an instant every savage was on foot. Eeleelah, who was nearest the dog, suddenly uttered a cry, that was repeated time and again until it was prolonged into a piercing shriek. She recognized the object that the dog was dragging. It was a lifeless human body. It was the body of Happy Harry, the Wild Boy of the Woods! He was covered with blood. His hair was all soaked and draggled. His face was covered almost beyond recognition with dirt and gore. His clothing was tattered and torn and thoroughly saturated with blood.

His dumb friend had seized him by one leg, and in this manner dragged him along the rough ground, through the brush, into the very heart of the Indian camp!

(To be continued—commenced in No. 801.)

Erminie:

THE GIPSY QUEEN'S VOW.

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING,
AUTHOR OF "THE DARK SECRET," "AN AW-
FUL MYSTERY," "VICTORIA," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXI. THE OUTLAW'S WIFE.

FOR some moments Pet continued to struggle violently, but finding all his efforts vain—worse than vain—and being half-suffocated for want of air, she fell back in her captor's arms, and lay perfectly still and quiet.

In that dreadful moment, she lost not one particle of her customary self-possession. She realized all her danger and peril vividly. She knew she was completely in the power of her worst enemy, and beyond all hope of extricating herself. Her whole appalling danger burst upon her at once; and though for one instant her very heart seemed to cease its beating, she neither fainted nor gave herself up to useless tears or hysterics, according to the usual custom of young ladies, when in real or imaginary danger. Not she, indeed! Pet's thoughts as she lay quietly in her captive's arms, ran somewhat after the following fashion:

"Well, Pet, child, you've went and put your foot in it beautifully, haven't you? Ain't you ashamed of yourself, to let Rozzel Garnet catch you, and lug you along like this! I wonder where they're going to bring me to, anyway, and what they're going to do with me next! Oh! won't there be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and pulling off of wigs at home when they find I've gone, vanished, evaporated, made myself 'thin air,' and no clue to my whereabouts to be found? Phew! this villainous shawl is fairly smothering me. I wish I could slip it off for about five minutes; and the way I'd yell would slightly astonish Mr. Garnet. I suppose papa will have flaming posters stuck up all around Judestown, in every color of the rainbow. I fancy I'm reading one of them: 'Lost, strayed, stolen, or run off with some deluded young man, a small, brown, yellow and black girl, not quite right in her head, wearing a red-and-green silk dress, with black eyes, a pair of gaiter boots, and black hair. Any person or persons giving information concerning the above will be liberally rewarded with from five to ten cents, and possess the everlasting gratitude of the community generally.' That's it! I wonder where they're taking me to? We're down on the beach now, for I can hear the waves on the shore. Good gracious! If they should carry me off to sea, the matter would be serious. 'Pon my word and honor! if I ever get out of this scrape, if I don't make Mr. Rozzel Garnet mind what he's up to, then my name's not Pet—Ur-r-r! I'm strangling, I declare. Suffocation must be a pleasant death, if I may judge by this specimen!"

While Pet was thus cogitating, Rozzel Garnet and his companion were rapidly striding over the wet, slippery beach. A being more perfectly guileless than Pet, in some ways, never existed, and this may in some measure account for the light manner in which she treated her captivity. Saucy, spirited, daring, full of exuberant life, fun, freedom and frolic, she was; but, withal, in some matters her simplicity was perfectly wonderful. For instance, she knew now she was a prisoner; she fancied she might be taken off somewhere, or held captive for a while. But she had the most perfect faith in her own wit, cunning and courage to ultimately escape. She feared no worse fate; she knew of none; she never even dreamed of any. She knew Rozzel Garnet pretended to love her—might urge her again to marry him; but that gave her not the slightest uneasiness in the world. In fact, Pet's love of adventure made her almost like this scrape she had got into. It would be something to talk about for the rest of her life; it made her quite a heroine, this being carried off; it was really like something she had so often read of in novels, or like a tragedy in a play.

With these sentiments, Pet lay quite still, listening intently, and wondering what was to come next. It seemed to her that they must have walked nearly half an hour, when they came to a dead halt, and she heard Rozzel Garnet say:

"Now, Bart, give the signal quick!"

A low, shrill, peculiar whistle followed; and then Pet, whose ears would have run themselves into points to hear the better, if she could, heard a rustling, as if of bushes pushed aside; a heavy sound, as if of rocks removing; and then Garnet, gathering her tighter in his hated embrace, stooped down, and passed through something which she knew must be a narrow aperture, and thence, carefully guiding himself with one hand, while he held her with the other, he descended a short flight of steps. Then he paused, and to the great relief of our half-stifled heroine, removed the thick shawl in which he had enveloped her. Pet's first use of her breath was to burst out angrily with:

"Well, it's a wonder you took the blamed thing off until you choked me dead! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Garnet, smothering a young lady this way, in a big blanket like that. I wish you'd let me go. I don't want to be carried like a baby any longer."

"Not so fast, pretty one," said Garnet, in a low tone of sultry exultation. "Be in no haste to quit these arms, for they are to be your home for the future."

"Humph! a pretty home they would be!" said Pet, contemptuously. "You'll have to consult me about that! Mr. Rozzel Garnet. Let me go, I tell you! I want to walk. A body might as well let a bear carry them as you!"

"As you please, my pretty lady-love!" said Garnet. "I do not think you will escape so easily this time as you did the last! That was your hour of victory: this is mine. Then you said neither earth, air, fire, nor water could hold you. Perhaps stout walls of rock can?"

"Don't be too sure, Mr. Garnet. There is such a thing as blowing up rocks, or an earthquake might happen, or the sea might overflow, or you and all your brothers in villainy might get paralytic strokes, or Satan might come and carry off the whole of you bodily to your future home. I'm sure I wish he would. You'll be an ornament to it when you get there—a 'burning and shining light,' in every sense of the word? Ain't you proud of yourself to have carried off a little girl so beautifully? When you found you couldn't do it alone you got another to help you; and so you bravely won the battle. Two great, big men to carry off one little girl! What an achievement! What a victory! You ought to have a leather medal and a service of tin plate presented to each of you! Oh my!" said Pet, in tones of withering irony.

Had it not been pitch dark where they stood, Pet would have seen his sallow face blanch with anger; but subduing his rage in the comforting thought that this little double-refined essence of audacity was completely in his power, he smiled an evil and most sinister smile, and replied:

"Jet, flash, and sparkle, little grenade! Dart fire, little stiletto, but you can do no more! Snarl and show your white teeth, little kitten; but your claws are shielded—you cannot bite now. Expand your wings, my bright little humming-bird; but you will find them clipped. Try to soar to your native heaven, my dazzling, glorious bird of paradise; and your drooping plumes will fall, fluttering and earth-stained to the dust."

"Well, that all sounds mighty fine, Mr. Garnet, and is a grand flourish of rhetoric on

your part. I make no doubt but you'll excuse me if I don't understand a single blessed word of it. You're a schoolmaster, and, of course, ought to understand what's proper; but your grand tropes and figures of speech are all a waste of powder and shot when addressed to me. Just talk in plain English, and don't keep on calling me names, and I'll feel greatly obliged. What a grenade and all them other things are I haven't the remotest idea; but I expect they're something dreadful bad, or you wouldn't keep calling me them. It's real impolite in you to talk so; and I wonder you ain't ashamed of yourself, Rozzel Garnet!"

"No, you don't understand, Miss Lawless," he said slowly, and with the same evil smile. "Shall I tell you in plainer words my meaning?"

"No, you needn't bother yourself," said Pet, shortly. "The less you say to me the better I'll like it. I'm not in the habit of talking to the offcasts of society, such as you are, Mr. Garnet; and, like frog-soup, though it does well enough for a time, one doesn't like it as a constant thing."

"Here, push on! push on!" said the gruff voice of Black Bart behind them. "No use standing palavering here all night. Get along, Rozzy, boy, and taking this little snapping-turtle along with you. Up with the glim, Jack, till ma'm'selle sees where she's going."

All this time they had been wrapped in the blackness of Tartarus, but now the two men descended the stone steps, and one of them, holding up a dark-lantern, let its rays stream around. Pet curiously cast her eyes about and saw she was in a narrow, rocky passage, with her head not more than an inch from the top. How far it led she could not tell, for the rays of light penetrated but a few feet, and beyond that stretched a black, yawning chasm that might have been the entrance into Pandemonium itself.

"Now, in we goes," said Black Bart, giving Pet a slight push forward. "Go first, Rozzy, lad, and show little mustard-seed, here, the way. Jack and I will keep in your wake."

"Mustard-seed and snapping-turtle," muttered Pet, as she prepared to follow Garnet. "Pet, my dear, you will have as many *aliases* before long as the most notorious blackleg from here to the Cannibal Islands. Well, if I'm not in a fix to-night! What will they say at home?"

As they went on the passage grew wider and broader, until at last Pet found herself in a spacious rock-bound apartment, well lighted, rudely furnished, and occupied by some half-dozen rough, hard-looking men in the garb of sailors. They were lying in various attitudes about the floor, with the exception of two, who sat at a rough deal-table playing cards.

They turned their eyes carelessly enough as Rozzel Garnet entered; but as their eyes fell upon Pet each man sprung to his feet, and stared at her in undisguised wonder.

There she stood, in the full glare of the light; her slender, girlish form drawn up to its full height; her brilliant silk dress flashing and glittering in the light; her short, dancing, flashing curls of jet falling around her crimson cheeks; her bright, undaunted black eyes wide open, and returning every stare as composedly as though she were sitting in her father's hall, and these men were her servants. Very much out of place looked Pet, in her rich, shabby robes and dazzling beauty, amid those roughly-clad, savage-looking men, and in that dismal underground apartment.

"Where is she?" asked Rozzel Garnet, unheeding their blank stare of surprise.

"Who?—the misses?" asked one of the men, without removing his eyes from Pet.

"Yes—of course."

The man pointed to the remote end of the room; and Pet, turning her eyes in that direction, saw a sort of opening in the wall, serving evidently for a door, and covered by a screen of thick, dark baize.

Garnet went toward it and called:

"Madame Marguerite."

"Well," said a woman's voice from within, with a strong foreign accent.

"Can I see you a moment, on business?"

"Yes—enter." And Pet saw a small, delicate-looking hand push aside the screen, and Garnet disappeared within.

"Here, little nettle, sit down," said Black Bart, pushing a stool toward Pet, gallantly, with his foot. "How do you like the looks of this here place, young woman?"

"Well," said Pet, "I should say there was no danger of thieves breaking in at night; and by the look of things, I don't expect they would find much for their pains, if they did break in. There's no danger of its blowing down windy nights—is there?"

"Well, no, I reckon there isn't," said Black Bart, with a grin, "seeing it's right under a hill, and nothing but solid rocks above and below."

"A strong foundation," said Pet; "like the true Church, it's built on a rock. I should think it would be damp, though, when the tide rises and fills it; and as I am subject to rheumatism—"

"No danger," said Bart. "I'll risk your drowning. There! Garnet's calling you. Go in there."

Pet arose, and Garnet, holding back the baize screen, motioned her to enter. She obeyed and looked curiously around.

The room was smaller than the one she had left and better furnished. The rocky floor was covered with India matting, and chairs, couches, and tables were strewn indiscriminately around. A bed with heavy curtains stood in one corner, and a stand containing books, writing materials, and drawing utensils stood opposite. Pet gave all these but a fleeting glance, and then her whole attention was caught and occupied by the person who stood between them, with one hand resting on the back of a chair, and her eyes fixed with a sort of stern, haughty scrutiny on Pet.

It was a woman of some five-and-thirty years of age, of middle size, and dressed in a solid and frayed black satin dress. Her face had evidently once been very handsome, for it still bore traces of former beauty; but now it was thin, sallow, and faded—looking still more faded in contrast with the unnaturally large, lustrous black eyes by which it was lit up. Her hair, thick and black, hung disordered and uncombed far over her shoulders, while jewels flashed from the pendants in her ears, and sparkled on the small, beautiful hands. Something in that face moved Pet as nothing had ever done before—there was such a look of proud, sullen despair in the wild, black eyes; a sort of fierce haughtiness in the dark, weird face; a look

HAUNTED.

BY EREN E. REXFORD.

How still the night is! hear the breeze
Make mournful music in the trees.
I hear the sad-voiced, autumn rain
Sob fiercely at the window-pane,
And all about the silent room
Grim shadows gather in the gloom.

Look in that corner! Do you see
A wan, white face that mocks at me?
A haunting face, with eyes that glow
As if some bale-fire burned below!
A face that jeers me, till I hide
My eyes, and turn my face aside!

You cannot see it? Strange indeed!
It laughs and mocks, and when I plead
In tears for it to go away,
It smiles in triumph, and will stay
To haunt me ever. See it smile!
To hear me talk to you the while!

Go hence! oh, ghost of love that died,
With flowers as frail as summertime!
What use to haunt my heart to-day
With memories of a vanished May?
Love was not for me. Let me be.
The dead are always dead to me.

Are always dead? I did forget
That some things live in long regret.
We strive to hide them under mold
Beneath a marble slab, so cold
As human hearts are; still they live
And haunt us, while we cry forgive!

Oh, ghostly shape, this mournful night
Go hence forever from my sight.
I thrust you from me in my pride.
Love dropped and faded, I thought it died.
Get back into the grave, I pray,
And haunt no more my lonely way.

Vials of Wrath:

OR,

THE GRAVE BETWEEN THEM.

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL,
AUTHOR OF "TWO GIRLS' LIVES," "LOVE-
BLIND," "OATH-BOUND," "BARBARA'S
FATE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

A LEADING HAND.

TRUE to her brave determination, Ethel Havelstock had made her arrangements to leave her home, once so happy, now so desolate, at once; and the afternoon of the day that saw her husband dancing attendance upon Ida Wynne, amid the elegant retirement of Tanglewood, witnessed her lonely departure from the little cottage in Harlem. The expressman had come for her trunk, and received his orders to allow it to remain in the office until sent for; the windows had all been carefully closed, and the last sobbing farewell had been taken; and then Ethel walked out the front door and locked it after her.

She did not glance back once, or even look to see if any of her strange neighbors were watching her away. If they did she never knew it, or that perhaps some of them gave her a sneering glance and curled thin lips to see her and her trunks leaving the house whose handsome master had gone some time before.

Or if any eyes looked kindly, pityingly after her young, black-robed form, and wondered who or what their sweet-faced, ladylike, reserved neighbor was—she never knew.

And it did not matter. Sympathy and sneers were alike unavailable to lift the heavy burden from her young life; alike powerless to alter the entire friendlessness that crushed her so as she walked along the busy streets.

Not a roof in all the whole world to which she might flee for even one night's shelter; not a woman friend to go to, to whom she might unobscure herself, and on whose affection rely. No one—no one between her and the hard, bitter, relentless world.

The thoughts were brooding darkly over her as she went slowly on; she felt her eyes growing hot and staring; her steps lagging and spiritless, her very heart sinking with some awful nervous foreboding that naturally frightened her, brave, noble as she was.

"This will not do. My brief dream is over, and sighing and bemoaning will never recall it. Frank is dead, and there is only one way left for me. I must work for my own support at whatever I can find to do. Let me begin by exorcising these demons of despair and regret whose influences are so baleful. I will not succumb to them."

She said it to herself, almost defiantly, and clenched her hands tightly as if to give power to her brave endeavor. She compelled herself to step along more quickly, less spiritlessly, and with a prayer in her heart for courage, and assistance and comfort, went more cheerfully on.

It was only a pleasantly long distance to the office of the real estate agent, to whom she delivered the key of the house, realizing as she turned to leave the place, that she had severed the very last tie that bound her to the past.

She felt the same old, unendurable agony rising up as the thought took rise, but she determinedly crushed it down, almost obstinately vowing she would not permit herself to dwell ever again upon what, while inevitable, could not fail of making her miserable. Then commenced her first real battle with the world; and, armed only with her womanly sweetness, her high-bred, dainty reserve, her courage and decision, she set forth alone, on foot, with a column of the New York Herald in her hand, to hunt for work, a home, and food.

It was heart-wearily—that afternoon's work, when Ethel rung bell and bell, to learn the "place" had been filled before nine o'clock that morning; when she was obliged to endure interviews whose rude curiosity was only equalled by contemptuous dismissal on account of her astounding ignorance on matters considered vitally important—such as proficiency in the noble arts of wax-work, hair-dressing, satin-embroidering, or lace mending.

It was just before sunset when Ethel turned discouragingly away from an imposing brown stone front, whose address was about half-way down her list. She dropped her veil as she descended the steps of the high stoop, and turned toward a quiet side street, leading into Union Square, where she had caught sight of a sign announcing a restaurant for ladies. She was not hungry, but weak from fasting and nervous exhaustion, and she knew she must eat, or become ill.

She quietly entered, and sat down at one of the tables and gave her simple order for a cup of tea and bread and butter—very simple and frugal, but the most she dare afford until something more substantial than the little roll of money in her pocket-book stood between her and the world.

There was no one in the saloon but herself, and she was very glad of it. She removed her little black kid gloves, and then her veil off her face—so fair, and spirited, with her great, wood-brown eyes, with the golden lashes and brows—and her vivid red lips, whose expression was one of such wistfulness.

She was a lady, every inch, and even the flippant waiting-girls, used to every class of society, subdued into respectful attention de-

spite the trifling order she gave, that, when it came, she ate with a graceful ease that was refinement itself.

Her frugal lunch disposed of, she was drawing on her gloves over her white hands, when a shadow as of one standing in the doorway, fell darkly over her. She raised her eyes casually and saw, looking at her with all the greatness and goodness of his soul kindling in his face and eyes, Leslie Verne!

Like a glimpse of sunshine in the gloom of a dungeon, was the sudden, grateful joy his presence brought her. She sprang almost eagerly from her seat, her hands extended.

"Oh, Leslie!"

Her greeting was a pitiful commingling of welcome, of sharp remembrance, of wailing pain, of beseeching pity—and in her face and in her eyes, the young man read that something had happened—something terrible to this young girl he loved so dearly.

He took her hands in his firm grasp and reassured her, drawing a chair to the same table.

"Ethel, what can be the matter! Your—your husband—"

He hesitated and winced at the word that his lips formed.

"Oh, Leslie—I am all alone now. He is dead!"

Her piteous, simple complaint touched his very heart core; a simple, solemn look spread over his bright, handsome face.

"Dead! my poor little girl! my poor little girl!"

His voice was inexpressibly tender, and his splendid blue eyes seemed almost caressing in their glances on Ethel's black-robed figure.

"Tell me, Ethel, all about it. Remember, I am your friend."

She thanked him from the depths of her heart for that, although her eyes only said so.

"There is so little to tell, Leslie, but it is so hard to bear. He was drowned, bathing—and he is buried in Greenwood. That is all."

She lifted her white, pain-sharpened face to his, looking at him with such eager, pitiful eyes that it almost unmanned him. Ethel, whom he worshiped so madly, breaking her heart for another, who was dead!

"I am sorry for you, Ethel," he said, simply. And he was, to know she suffered so deeply; and as he watched her in her fair, lovely beauty, so lone, so lone, it seemed to him if he only dared take her in his strong arms, and cradle her there forever, he would ask no higher boon on earth. It was hard for him—that ardent, eager lover, who loved Ethel with an intensity before which Frank Havelstock's regard was as the flicker of a rushlight against the blazing midday sun—almost unendurable to be obliged to sit there and to listen to her sorrow, and to know she had no thought for him more than on the day she refused his love for the man who now was dead.

Yet there was a wild elation of soul at the idea that Ethel was free again—free to be wooed and won when time should have healed her sorrow, although such thoughts were entirely premature at present. But in his great love, he vowed that Ethel should have him for the truest friend, the dearest brother that woman ever had. While he lived the world should use her very gently; and then—then—perhaps in time to come—The precious hope that bloomed in his big heart of some such future as he had dreamed of before, when Ethel should be his bride, and Meadowbrook their home, never faded from that moment.

"But, what shall you do, Ethel? I know you will never return to Mrs. Lawrence's."

"Never! Her house can never be my home again! But you know I am young, and strong, and able to work my way. Besides, Leslie, I seem to have new, fresh courage since I have so providentially met you. I feel I am no longer utterly friendless."

Her dark eyes were full of trust and gratitude as she looked at him, and young Verne smiled joyously in the fullness of happiness that Ethel trusted him, that Ethel depended on him, even for so little.

"Thank you," he returned, simply; "our meeting was ordered by Providence, I believe, and I am glad to know I can serve you in any way."

"I have been looking all the afternoon for employment, but found none as yet; I hope to be more successful to-morrow."

"But if not—"

A gloom gathered over her sweet face for a moment; then she smiled bravely.

"Then I will try again. Surely, in all New York, there is something for me to do."

"Poor child! poor innocent child!"

His love and pity were too deep for other words, as he looked at her, so nobly and bravely defying fate.

"Can you not advise me, Leslie? I will do as you say, if you think my plans are infeasible."

Her childish trust in him was exquisitely sweet, and he felt his face flushing under her frank gaze.

He suddenly reached his hands across the table to her, and took her own in them.

"Ethel, you may trust me—none the less that you are the dearest one on earth to me this moment, even as you were the day you so kindly refused my love. I will not wound you by another hint of that, or take unfair advantage of your position to renew my suit. I will only swear to you that I will be your dear friend, your older brother, on whom you may rely with the most implicit confidence. Ethel, friend, sister, will you agree to the compact?"

She lifted her eyes, all alight with thankfulness, and infinite trust, to his eager face.

"I accept your kindness, Leslie; and God will reward you for your help and comfort to me in my great distress."

A second's solemn silence followed, then Verne arose from his seat.

"You had better go now, Ethel, and we will walk through the Square, just below here, while we arrange a little business affair that has occurred to me."

Ethel took up her check, that Leslie had not offered to touch, and paid its value.

Then, side by side, the two went leisurely down the thronged street, into a quieter block, and then into the leafy, pleasant square where dozens of people were enjoying the walks, the seats, the fountain.

"I have not told you how doubly Providential our meeting was, Ethel. What will you think when I tell you I only came to the city this morning and shall return to Meadowbrook by the evening boat? You might have chosen a hundred other days for your sad task, and not have seen me."

He looked so tenderly down on the slight figure on his arm, so graceful, so ladylike.

"Yes," she answered, almost reverentially, "I think God arranged it for me; and I know He will not desert me after He has permitted me to receive such a blow."

"You are so good, Ethel—teach me to be, won't you?"

For answer, a faint, deprecating smile fluttered around her mouth—the very first since her sorrow. Brief as it was, it lighted Verne's pathway as if with liquid gold.

"But, to the 'business affair,' Ethel. My whole, sole and chief errand in New York to-day was to visit my aunt, Mrs. Argelyne—my dear dead mother's sister. I had not seen her since her return from a seven years' tour through Europe and the Holy Land, and ran down to-day in obedience to a telegram announcing her safe return several days ago. She lives on Fifth Avenue, in the house where my mother died."

There was a sadness in his voice, for which Ethel felt a sympathy; she pressed his arm softly to mutely express it, and although the gentle contact thrilled him to the very soul, he did not manifest his feelings.

"You wonder what all this has to do with you, Ethel? Shall I tell you?"

She assented, wonderingly.

"Just this. I found Mrs. Argelyne almost inconsolable over the loss of her friend and companion, a young lady, whose name I did not charge my memory with. My aunt declares there never will occur another to fill the vacant place—a position only a lady could fill, and of whom only pleasant, congenial duties would be expected, in turn for a delightful home, sympathy, and my aunt's large affection. Does Ethel know of any one who can console Mrs. Argelyne?"

The tears rushed to her eyes in the depth of her gratitude.

"Oh, Leslie! if it could only be, I never would be able to repay you. Do you think she would be suited with me? Oh, I would try so hard to please her—and you, too, Leslie."

Her frank, girlish eagerness was charming; and Verne laughed, joyously.

"I will vouch for your adaptability, and her satisfaction. Shall I call a carriage and take you at once? I would go home to Meadowbrook a happy man if I knew you slept under my aunt's roof to-night."

His earnest care for her welfare was so sweet to her; she felt rested in body and soul as she had not been for so many weary days.

"I will go at once, Leslie. She can only say no; and I would rather know at once."

Verne smiled, assuringly.

"She will not say 'no.' I want you to tell her your whole history—will you?"

Without waiting for a literal answer, Verne hailed a passing coupe, and gave the coachman the order:

"No.—Fifth Avenue."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER'S WORK.

AFTER GEORGIA left the library Lexington also went out into the fresh, cool afternoon air, that seemed especially grateful to him after his fevered interview.

His wife's words haunted him strangely—"I confess or deny nothing." What did they mean? Did they intend to cover the guilt she was brave enough to admit, thus tacitly, by non-denial, or did she mean to taunt him with her indifference? Whichever way she intended, she had certainly succeeded in making Lexington more angry and jealous than ever, and as he descended the steps and strolled out among the flower-bordered walks, it was with a revengeful determination to find out who this secret lover of Georgia's was, who was so much more successful than he in winning her affections.

He walked on, with his head drooped on his breast, indulging in his gloomiest reflections, almost wishing he were back again among the jungles and deserts of Africa he had left only to satisfy the cravings of a nature that refused to be satisfied with anything else than the affection which Georgia could bestow upon him.

Her first refusal to receive him in his penitent tenderness was a sharp blow upon which he had not counted; but he had imputed it to her impulses, that he knew were strong, and, away down in his heart, forgave her even while his manhood's pride still bled under the wound she had dealt with unsparing hand.

But this last revelation—this accusation that Havelstock was so loath to make, on account of his earnest friendship—this charge so terrible that was true, partly on the strength of the informant who would never have made it had he not been infallibly aware of its pitiful positiveness; partly, and still more credibly, by reason of his wife's singular conduct when he had first accused, and then, in the greatness of his love, given her a loop-hole of escape that she utterly ignored—of course, because she preferred her lover to her husband.

There were not pleasant reflections that filled his mind as he walked mechanically, and further and further from the house, into a stillness and loneliness that was infinitely restful to him, and from which calming influence he was angrily startled by the appearance of a small boy, evidently no stranger in the grounds, judging by the easy speed of his gait, and the direct paths he chose in order to reach the entrance of the house.

Lexington eyed him sharply—suspiciously.

"Well, what do you want? These are private grounds, inside which no strangers have any business."

His curt tones had its effect on the youngster; he instantly fell back, attempting an awkward bow, but never making an effort to retrace his steps, and, it seemed to Lexington, glancing with anxious scrutiny to the house.

"Who do you want? Have you any message for any one at Tanglewood? If so, I will deliver it."

His keen eyes evidently intimidated the boy, who stammered and hesitated in his answers.

"I haven't no message, no nothing!" and then paused, stubbornly digging his toes into the loose gravel walk.

"Then clear out whichever way you came! And in the future, if you have business at Tanglewood, come in at the servants' entrance. Don't let me find you prowling about my yards an—"

He stopped suddenly, as if paralysis had seized his tongue, for from the crown of the boy's loose straw hat there slipped down a narrow piece of paper, that fluttered to the ground, one side of which was covered with pencil writing.

A dark flush shot over the boy's face as he saw it, and he instinctively made a dive for it; but Lexington was quicker than he, and as he grasped it without a word, the boy took to his heels in terror, evidently having been previously impressed with the necessity of keeping Mr. Lexington in ignorance of his errand.

Lexington read the message, standing like a statue; a message to Georgia, his wife, from Carleton Vance, begging her to meet him at the time and place of the last interview, that same evening.

There was no name subscribed by which Lexington might know that his supposed unknown rival was his wife's first husband; and he laughed bitterly to himself as he thought the handwriting was sufficiently well known to Georgia that no name was needed to tell her who wanted her at the "same time and place."

"So her lover has appointed another interview at the summerhouse, where Frank saw them. And she will go—this fair, false wo-

man, who is at once my curse and happiness—this wife—ha! ha!—this beautiful wife of mine, on whose honor I would have staked my soul's eternal welfare."

He crushed the paper in his hands with a force he would have used had its writer been in his power instead; then he resumed his walk, with wild, restless eyes, and nervous, uncertain steps.

"She would neither deny or confess, eh? and yet, at the very moment when she assumed her high-tragedy airs of an innocence beyond reproach, she was expecting this appointment—on her way to the grounds, in all probability, to receive personally what I have so unluckily intercepted."

He fairly gnashed his teeth in the awful fury of his blazing jealousy—this man who worshipped the ground his wife spurned with her foot.

"Shall I give it to her with my own hands, and see her writhe under the tortures of her discovered secret? Or, shall I meet him—curse him!—myself, when he comes to take her in his arms and receive the kisses she chooses to withhold from me? Shall I let them meet in their pretended secrecy, and then beard them with their disgrace, and strike them dead at my feet?"

He was fairly beside himself in his mad passion; his eyes were bloodshot, and glared fiercely at the offensive paper in his hot, trembling hands.

"Somehow, I cannot realize it, even with this damning evidence in my possession. How can it be possible that Georgia, my Georgia, is so false—so false! I have worshiped her, as men do their God, and even when icest coldness or stubborn pride has intervened between us, I have always had for my one anchor the blessed thought that the time would come when she would love me, by sheer force of my own undying love for her. But now—now—I would give ten years off my miserable life if I could only despise her as she deserves; if I could only root out this deathless passion for her that I feel over and above the anguish her perfidy gives me."

His footsteps became slower and slower, until at last he sunk down on the grassy sward, almost feebly; he covered his haggard face with his hands, shutting out the mocking brightness of the sunlight.

It was the very spot where Frank Havelstock, the man Lexington loved and trusted implicitly, had thrown himself in such a transport of passion the night he had resolved to secure Ida Wynne and part of Tanglewood; but Lexington could not know of that circumstance, and the mute ground told no secrets; nor did the soft, low summer sounds whisper what they knew.

It was nearly the dinner hour when Lexington returned to the house. He went up the flight of marble steps and entered the hall, passing directly up the grand staircase to his own private rooms.

He did not as much as glance toward Georgia's sitting-room door, which, directly opposite his, stood ajar; he was too bitterly angry, too thoroughly outraged in every feeling of his nature to vouchsafe a sign of her existence, by merely admitting that he remembered her private apartments were there.

He passed through the door of his sitting-room, and closed it after him, deposited his hat on the marble table, and then, halted suddenly in extremest surprise.

For there, at his desk, in an attitude of deepest despair, with her head buried in her folded arms, her whole figure convulsed with the hearse-crying sobs that shook her severely, was his wife.

"This is an unwarrantable intrusion. May I ask to what I am indebted for the rare pleasure of your company?"

His voice fairly stung her; she sprang from her crouching attitude, with her pale, tear-stained face toward him, her beseeching eyes fairly wild with anguish.

"Don't—don't! Oh, Theodore, I have come to tell you all—"

He interrupted her with a sneer.

"Indeed! Allow me to forestall any confessions and playing upon my weaknesses, by informing you that I am aware of what you would say—I know all!"

He was watching her keenly as he spoke; his voice harsh, yet husky with some powerful emotion. She was so fair, if false; so wicked, and yet—he loved her madly!

She started slightly at his positive language; then a ray of hope radiated on her face. She clasped her beautiful hands across her breast in humblest imploration, and stepped so near him he might have counted her heart-beats.

"You know all, Theodore? and you will forgive me! forgive me for the innocent cheat I practiced upon you; forgive me that I did not tell you sooner?"

She made her plea, then waited for the answer, hope and fear agonizing on her sweet face.

He made no answer beyond a grim, steady stare at her, while his fingers clutched the fateful note of which she had no knowledge.

"I know I have been wicked, Theo—proud, and obstinate, and haughty. I have been unwilfully in my repellant anger, unjust in my cruel thoughts. But I have loved you through it all—I always have loved you with all my heart, and soul, and strength! Even to-day, when I said those awfully cruel words, I loved you more than ever! Theo! Theo! take me back!"

She fell on her knees before him, at his very feet; her arms clinging around his knees, her upturned face eloquent with earnestness, her eyes darkly passionate—waiting for the answer that came, like a knell of doom.

Slowly he brought his hands from behind him—that the note fairly scorched as Georgia knelt before him; that made his rage and anger burn the hotter as he thought how she was daring to confess and beg his favor in the same breath.

"Georgia, such a tirade is useless. Get up, and I will answer you, false, cruel, vile, though—"

She was on her feet in a second, a wild, moaning cry on her pale lips.

"Theo—no—no! Unsay—"

He interrupted her with a move of his hands.

"Listen, madam. I say I know all. Your stolen interview, your secret lover, your subsequent agitation—everything, everything! You stand before me, this minute, a fair, beautiful woman, but stripped of the mask you have worn, and appearing as you are—a wife false to her marriage vows."

A scream of terrible anguish burst from her lips; she reached her hand toward him, in a piteous gesture, but he curled his lips and stepped further away.

"I do not admire amateur theatrical performances, so please spare me. Perhaps this will serve to compose your thoughts."

He thrust the note in her hands, with an expression of fierce gloom on his face.

She took it mechanically, and read it; a slow scarlet flush staining her cheek.

"Well, shall you go?"

She stared at him in stolid amazement, her hands and the paper falling limply to her sides.

"I ask, shall you meet this lover of yours, or will you, thinking to hoodwink me further, pretend to be indignant, and allow him to miss his chance while you remain at home to prove your charming innocence?"

Georgia dashed the paper to the floor in a transport of emotion.

"Listen, for God's sake! if you only knew how I fear, hate him—if—"

"You can not impose upon me by such flimsy excuses. Women never 'fear and hate' men whom they consent to see as you have this one. Save yourself further repentance by adding no more falsehood to your long catalogue of sins."

He made an elaborate bow, and passed into his dressing-room, closing and locking the door after him.

The silent insult was enough for Georgia; she turned quickly around, a low, heartrending moan on her quivering lips, and went from the room to her own.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 298.)

Pacific Pete,

The Prince of the Revolver.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.,
AUTHOR OF "OLD BULL'S-EYE," "YELLOW-
STONE JACK," ETC.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A MASTER STROKE.

THAT word decided Mark. His veins seemed filled with fire, and a deadly light shone in his eyes as he sprang forward. Upon that moment hung the lives of more than one of the party. Though surprised, the two outlaws could easily have protracted the struggle until assistance could arrive from the cavern, when Old Business and Mark must flee for life or die fighting. In any case this carefully laid plan would be frustrated.

With a grating curse the trailer sprang up and clutched Austin by the throat, bearing him back to the ground with as much ease, apparently, as though dealing with a child, and held him motionless behind the screen of bushes. All this could not be done without more or less noise being made, and the two outlaws glanced quickly back. But nothing suspicious met their eyes, and once more they pushed on, over the ridge.

"Look here, boy," said Old Business, in a low, grating whisper; "you make another move like that and we part company. I thought you had some sense!"

"You said that was the man who murdered father," gasped Mark, fingering his throat, where were plainly to be seen the five livid prints of the trailer's fingers.

"So he did—one of them. But it's not now that he must pay the forfeit. There's the girl to think of, too. If I hadn't checked you all would have been lost. Now take your choice of two things. Either you must be content to wait for my word, or else we will part here, each to do his own work, in his own way. Which is it?"

"You don't mean to let him escape?"

"No;

"Make a sound louder than a whisper and I'll kill you like a rat! You know me!" he hissed into the outlaw's ear.

"What's all this rumpus?" demanded a voice, as the tall figure of a man came out of the shadows.

"Just in time, boy—you see I didn't brag a mite too high. But fust—lend that ornery cuss a kick under the ear. Don't be too polite—never mind of you do hurt your corns. Give 'im a buster—he's such a dog-gone hog he'll git mad ef ye don't give him all you've got."

Mark obeyed, in part, at least, but the touch of his heavy cowhide boot was far more gentle than it would have been but for remembering that the quivering wretch was the father of Edna. Then the young miner sprang to the trailer's side.

"What now—want any help with this one?" "Pull the rope from round my waist—you know what I put it. So—now take a hitch round this critter's corpus, and see 't you hold him tight, while I look to his weapons. Mind your eye, now. He's slippery'r'n a hunk o' hog meat fried in lard."

Either Pacific Pete was badly frightened or, the most probable explanation, he knew that any attempt at escape would be worse than useless, under the circumstances. At any rate, he made no resistance, while Mark worked the rawhide cord firmly around his arms above the elbow, drawing them close together behind his back. Then Old Business removed the revolver from the captive's belt and secured them upon his person, together with a richly jeweled poniard taken from Pacific Pete's bosom.

At this moment Eli Brand uttered a groan, and lifted himself to a sitting posture. With a curse, Old Business sprang toward him and dealt him a fierce kick upon the side of the head. Brand fell back insensible, quivering in every muscle.

"F you run with me, boy, you've got to larn to do up your work better than that," grumbled the trailer, as his hold closed upon the outlaw chief's shoulder. "He might 'a plugged either on us, then, or give a yell that'd bring the hull town down on our backs; which wouldn't be very healthy, sence we're counted as woman-stealers, thanks to these two jilicious whang-doodles."

"You're going to leave him here, then?" "Must. Don't like to, but it can't be helped. One's all we kin manage, an' this is the biggest town. It's the little one we want to git, an' this one 'll be—"

"You said that one of these men murdered my father," persisted Mark, in a low but vindictive tone. "Which one?"

"You want revenge; that's nat'l enough. So do I. I've sworn to hev it, n'r I won't go back on my word. But not to-night. One thing at a time; they'll last longer, an' 'll be better done. That—you needn't kick. I've said it, an' that's enough. The time 'll come, when you kin square up all accounts, but you must wait for the word, which I won't give ontel I git a good ready."

Mark was forced to submit, though with an ill grace. Day by day the influence which Old Business had gained over him was increasing, and when their wishes clashed, the weaker was forced to give way.

"May I ask the reason of this brutal and unprovoked assault?" at this point Pacific Pete spoke, his voice sounding low and singularly soft.

"If robbery is your object, you will make little by carrying me off, now. Still, as I have business on hand, of importance, if you will mention the value you set upon my person, I will give you an order for the amount. It will be paid without any questions, at the Golden Horn."

"Ef your house yender was made of solid gold, an' every livin' critter in it was so many big diamonds, without crack or flaw, the hull lot wouldn't begin to ransom one o' your finger-nails," was the sharp retort. "I don't reckon you know who I be, though you did seem to recognize me t'other day at the Hole in the Wall. I've bin on your trail for some years, now, but you're holler at last, an' I reckon when we git through a settlin' up, thar won't be nough of you left to grease a single patch for a rifle-bullet. But thar—we'll finish our little pow-wow when we git to our hotel. Mark, you walk on ahead, takin' the trail for the cave. Your boss 'll foller him, an' mind, ef you git to cuttin' up any shiness, or turn balky, you'll find a pizen nasty driver 's got hold o' the ribbons. Gee—up thar—puckachee!" and Old Business twitched sharply the rope which secured the arms of the captive outlaw chief.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

OLD BUSINESS EFFECTS A TRADE.

The little cave of ten beneath the three cedars, when occupied by three men, when the twinkling stars gradually faded and retired before the coming day. The scene was a peculiar one, and not without interest.

The trio were Mark, Old Business, and the captive outlaw. Having full confidence in the rawhide thongs, the trailer and Mark had spent several hours in sleep, lying before the low, narrow entrance. Then, awaking, Old Business kindled a fire, and producing the necessary materials from his cache in the corner, cooked some bacon and made a pot of coffee. Just now he was squatting before his prisoner, feeding him, the flickering glow of the tiny fire lighting up their faces.

"You needn't try to put on frills with me," quietly spoke the trailer. "I know you from A to Amperсанд, an' I don't b'lieve you've quite forgotten me, yit. Ef so, you know that I don't often say a thing twice. I reckon you'd better take a bite and sup."

Though with evident loathing, the outlaw obeyed, swallowing the fat meat with difficulty, and drinking the black, muddy compound with a wry face.

"What do you intend doing with me?" he asked, as Old Business appeared satisfied with the obedience shown.

"What I mean to do fust, is easy told," slowly replied the trailer. "I'm goin' to swap you off. A ter that—well, you'll know better when the time comes. Now, boy," he added, turning to Mark; "you jest step outside with me, an' I'll give ye your 'structions. Thar mustn't be no mistakes in this job—'twouldn't be healthy."

As soon as they disappeared, Pacific Pete sought once more to burst the bands which held him helpless, throwing his entire strength into the effort, but the rawhide cord only cut deeper into his white flesh, without giving one particle. Old Business chuckled grimly as he re-entered the den and saw the flushed, damp brow, but he made no remarks, simply lifting the captive upright, after severing the thongs upon his feet.

With a hand upon either shoulder, Pacific Pete was forced to walk rapidly toward the Retreat, but when the valley was cleared, the order changed. Mark Austin walked in the rear, holding the rope in one hand, a cocked revolver in the other, while Old Business glided along in advance, his keen eyes roving

ing everywhere, with rifle ready for instant use.

In this manner they reached the top of the range lying opposite the outlaw's den, when they came to a halt. Motioning for Mark to keep a good lookout, the trailer addressed his captive.

"You've had time enough to recognize me—I can see by your eyes that you know who I am. Knowing this, you will be more ready to believe what I am going to say. So listen, and mark my words. In the cave yonder is a young woman, called Edna Brand. I've sworn to set her free, for she loves and is loved by Mark, yonder, my nephew. I'm going to offer you for her—long odds, you may think, but don't forget that I am only giving you up for a time. For years I have trailed you, my hatred growing deeper and more intense with every day; but I can afford to be patient, when I know that I can put my hand upon you at any time."

"One thing more. I am going to take you down there; but you need hope for nothing from your men. I will hold a revolver at your temple—not your heart; I've learned the secret of your charmed life, you see. At the first sign of treachery, you die. After that, I don't care much what becomes of me. So, for your own sake, you had better not leave the plain trail which I mark out for you."

"But if they refuse to obey me—"

"Then we'll die together—a romantic ending, quite in keeping with our lives. But there; I've said enough. Mark," he added, turning to Austin; "you know the part you have to play. If you don't hear from me in half an hour, you can be sure that we two are rubbed out, and you must try the other places."

With one hand firmly holding the outlaw's collar, Old Business coolly descended the hill, only pausing when beneath the bullet-scarred cedar tree. At his command Pacific Pete uttered a peculiar whistle; the usual signal, when the figure of Wister promptly appeared at the cave entrance. Old Business smiled grimly as he noticed the lieutenant's start of surprise and heard his little exclamation of wonder, on beholding the disgraceful situation of his chief. Pacific Pete shuddered with shame and made motion as though about to end all by one mad struggle for liberty; but as the cold iron touched his temple, and a low, warning hiss parted the trailer's lips, he realized the utter folly of such an action, and submitted to the inevitable.

"Repeat what I say, word for word," sternly muttered Old Business; then adding, "Wister, I've got into trouble, and I rely upon your helping me out; but it can only be done in one way. The faintest sign of violence will be the signal for my death. This man has sworn to blow my brains out, in such a case, and he will keep his word. He has captured me, and as reason demands that I give up to him the young woman, Eli Brand's daughter. I have consented, and I ask you to help me carry the exchange out. Warn the men that my life depends upon their strict obedience."

Word for word the outlaw chief repeated this speech, though his voice was unsteady and his face flushed deep with mortification and rage. Truly it was a bitter blow, to be so humiliated before those who had, until now, looked upon him as little less than a demigod.

"An' jest add from me, mister man," called out the trailer to Wister; "that I'm jest little Old Business chuck up to the hawle. Tell the boys in yender that they kin rub me out, mebbe, but they can't do it quick enough to keep me from spillin' the head-kiverin' o' this rooster. I reckon that's plain enough talk."

Pacific Pete, his hands bound behind him, the cold muzzle of a cocked revolver touching his temple, was forced to cross the valley and climb to the ledge before the eager, curious eyes of a score of his men. Trembling in every nerve, pale as a ghost, he looked more dead than alive. A more merciless punishment for one of his proud, haughty spirit could not have been devised. And it was to enjoy this to the full that Old Business chose the greater danger of entering the cave after Edna instead of having her brought forth.

The trailer paused when fairly upon the ledge, and holding his captive firmly, undaunted by the angry, threatening glances cast upon him, said:

"Glad to meet ye, gen'lmen, one an' all. Yer see I'm on a tower o' pleasure an' fun gen'ally, an' your boss, hyar, brung me here to see how the old thing works. From all 'pearances, I've chose a orkward time for my visit—you look like my old woman used to when I'd bring home a crowd to dinner in house-cleanin' time. But don't be skeered. I won't stay long. Only—one thing. I'm dreadful nervous—hain't got no more nerves than an old maid when she sees a rat. N'r I couldn't never stand a joke. Ef you was to try to skeer me, say with a knife, pistol or any such thing, I feel in my bones that I'd do somethin' terrible—blow the hull top o' the head off o' the boss, here, more'n likely."

"Enough of this nonsense," said Pacific Pete, in a low, strained voice. "You understand him, men. I ask you not to interfere; not because I really fear death, but because I wish to live to repay him all these insults—as I will—ten thousand fold!"

"Good enough! that's the kind of talk I like to hear," and the trailer laughed recklessly. "Some o' you fellers light us to the place where the gal is kept."

A nod from the outlaw chief enforced this order, and catching up a rude lamp, Wister led the way to the little chamber where Old Business, as Marco of the Scar, had peered in upon the sleeping maiden. With a little cry, Edna shrunk back, a look of terror upon her pale, worn face, but Old Business hastened to reassure her.

"You shan't be hurt, little one. Your friends had found you out, an' I've come to lead you to them. You'll go?"

The brief gleam of hope faded from the maiden's face.

"I have no friends—even my father has deserted me!"

"You have two friends, at least, little one," was the earnest reply; "myself and Mark Austin. You can trust us; I am old enough to be your father, and Mark—easy thar—make another move like that, an' you're a gone sucker!" he cried, as Pacific Pete sought to free himself, seeing a gleam of hope in the trailer's interest in Edna; but Old Business was not to be caught napping.

"I will trust you—anything is better than to remain here and suffer the insults—"

"Every one of these insults shall be bitterly atoned for—you hear that?" and the trailer glared fiercely upon the two men. "I swear it—by the great Eternal!"

"You won't have long to wait for the chance," quietly replied Wister. "I can read death written upon your forehead now."

"It's your'n then," laughed Old Business. "Come, little one; we'd better be travelin'."

You keep close to me, but don't git skeered an' grab my arm, as these varmints might give me trouble. Now, old hoss, lead the way back."

In silence the quartette retraced their steps, speedily reaching the outer chamber. Still holding Pacific Pete firmly, Old Business stepped out upon the ledge and uttered a shrill whistle. The next moment Mark Austin broke cover and came running swiftly forward. Pale and trembling, scarce able to believe her eyes, Edna recognized the loved one whom she had, until that moment, believed dead. Then, forgetting all else, she sprang into his arms. And Mark! His bashfulness was not so great as to prevent his improving the golden opportunity, and Edna's pale lips grew red beneath his passionate kisses.

"I don't blame ye for likin' it, boy—no, I don't," laughed Old Business. "I used to play bum'lebee myself, when I was younger an' better-lookin'; but don't you think you'd better put off the rest ontel you kin take it more quiet-like? Thar—you know what I told ye. Go do it."

"I have kept my part of the contract," said Pacific Pete, as the lover hastily left the ledge. "Keep yours—remove your hand."

"I will—when they have got long enough start," was the cool reply. "I'm not such a fool, thank you. Come; you and I are going over to the tree, yonder. We'll wait there just half an hour. Then I'll set you free, unharmed, nor will I try to harm you until you have earned yourself."

White with baffled rage, the outlaw chief could do nothing but submit while the pistol muzzle was at his head. Together the couple reached the cedar tree, where, as he expected, Old Business found his rifle, left there by Mark. Seated side by side they waited until the half-hour had crept by. Then casting his captive loose, Old Business caught up his rifle and leaped behind a boulder.

In obedience to a shrill yell from Pacific Pete, the outlaws poured forth from the cave, fully armed. A rifle-crack; then revolver shots—Old Business was at work!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LOVE AND VENGEANCE.

AGAIN the little cave beneath the three cedars was inhabited, again its echoes were awakened by the sound of human voices; but the voices were soft and low, breathing of love, devotion and peacefulness.

Edna nestled close beside Mark, his arms wound tightly yet tenderly around her yielding form, her eyes looking up into his with an expression of trusting love that not even the dim, subdued light that shimmered down from above could conceal.

The words had been spoken, the question asked and answered. From this day, henceforward, their trail in life was to be the same.

They sat, for hour after hour, scarce speaking a word, yet busily conversing with eyes and lips, reaching and answering the same old, old story; and the little green lizard cocked its head upon one side, a shrewd twinkle in its glittering, diamond eyes, just as though it understood their mute speech.

The day wore on. The sun passed the point from whence its rays streamed into the little cave. The light gradually grew more and more dim. Edna nestled closer to her lover. A dreamy, delicious languor crept over her senses, and then, close held to her lover's breast, she slumbered.

A low, peculiar whistle came floating to Austin's ear, and he listened eagerly for its repetition. Again the signal sounded, and no longer doubting, the young miner answered it. He knew that his friend, Old Business, was at hand.

The sound, continuous as it was, awoke Edna, and, blushing deeply in the friendly gloom, she shrunk back as a dark figure suddenly entered the cave. Not a little to Mark's surprise a second followed; but the voice of Old Business quickly reassured him.

"I've brung ye a visitor, children, but don't be oneasy. Thar ain't much danger o' his ever tellin' what he sees here. Children, 'low me to introduce the meanest, pizenest, most ornary two-legged critter 'at ever disgraced human nature—that is Eli Brand, Eskwire."

"My father!" gasped Edna, her fingers closing upon Mark's arm as she drew closer to him; an involuntary movement of dread.

"Thar's jest whar you make a mistake, little one," and Old Business gave a satisfied chuckle. "Please the pigs you never come from no sech ornary, low-lived stock as him! Strawberries don't grow on jimson weeds—not much! No, no, my little turkle-dove—the dirty old buzzard lied when he called you da'ter, an' one o' my reasons fer bringin' him here was to make him 'fess the hull truth consarnin' you."

Edna was fairly stupefied by this blunt assertion, and could scarce believe her ears; yet there was an accent of truth in the trailer's tone that forbade the idea of his jesting.

"Now, old pizen," he added, addressing Brand, "I'm goin' to unlock your mouth, but jest b'ar in mind that I ain't in the humor for standin' any nonsense. When I ax you a question you'll answer it, just as straight as you can wag your tongue. I mean to hev the hull truth out o' you, ef I hev to tortur' you from now tell the cows come home. You understand?"

"I'll confess everything—only spare my life!" gasped Eli Brand, as the gag was removed from between his jaws. "Give me time to repent—I'm not fit to die!"

"You think you're fit to live, I s'pose—sweet Cornelia! But look here. I ain't goin' to make any terms with such a pizen critter as you. You've run the length o' your halter, but you'll be brung up easier if you make a clean breast o' everythin'. That's all I kin promise ye."

With a groan of miserable fear the captive relapsed into silence, while Old Business, having lighted his pipe, crouched down beside the entrance and briefly explained to Mark and Edna what had occurred after their departure, at the same time keeping a close lookout through the leafy screen, as though expecting pursuit.

He told her he had waited under the cedar tree until he knew that Mark and Edna had time to break their trail and reach the covert. Then he picked off Wister with his rifle, emptied one revolver into the mass of yelling outlaws, and, satisfied that they would think only of him in their thirst for revenge, he fled at the top of his speed.

Up hill and down dale the chase led, but the trailer was soon convinced that not one among the pursuers could nearly equal him either in speed or endurance, and when satisfied with the distance he had led them from the little cave, he put his whole powers into play and rapidly distanced the outlaws. Then doubling, he broke his trail in a running stream, and bent his way—not to the cave, but back to the spot where Eli Brand had concealed the gold for which he had twice committed murder. He reasoned shrewdly that Brand would not be long away from where his heart's treasure

was hidden. Fortune stood his friend still. Scarcely had he reached the spot when Brand came up the valley. He had laid for an hour insensible, from the effects of the trailer's last kick, and when he finally recovered he made all haste to regain his *cacoe*, meaning to flee from his comrades in crime that very night. Instead, he was captured by Old Business, just as he realized the horrible fact of his dearly-bought gold having disappeared. Bound and gagged, he was driven to the cave beneath the three cedars.

"I knowed he wouldn't be very pleasant company, but the pizen tarantuler o' nat'l cussedness he's got some secrets in his knowledge box which we'll all be the better for his spittin' out. Now, old Rusty, unlimber your tongue. Fust, tell me the hull truth 'bout this lady, here. Don't 'low yourself to lie, or—"

Brand, evidently realizing the utter folly of resistance, obeyed. In a low, dogged tone, he briefly narrated the same story which had so deeply interested Pacific Pete two nights before, with some additions. The man who was killed at his feet that night, full sixteen years ago, was named Maurice Vanoy. For years they had been partners and comrades in sin, though Vanoy was ever the leader. At his death Brand was true to his pledge, and carried the little girl—whom he called Edna from that time on—far away with him. Since that day he had been a father to her, had loved—

—don't reckon you'd better try that line, old crockerdile," dryly observed the trailer. "You hain't studied the part long enough. You'll make more by playing a straight hand. Now, tell us 'bout this Gospel Dick a'fear!"

Eli Brand cowered down, trembling in every limb, a wild, hunted look filling his eyes. His lips parted, but no words issued. He seemed incapable of speaking. Nor did Old Business press the matter. In a cold, monotonous voice he uttered these words:

"It is night. The half round moon looks down upon the valley. What does it see? A collection of huts, scattered over the town and rugged-looking hollow. Of all that camp, only one man seems awake. He, like a venomous serpent, is silently creeping toward one of the huts. He slips open the canvas. He enters—bends over the sleeping man, and then—! The swift downward stroke, the dull thud as a knife strikes against the heaving, convulsed breast; a brief struggle, followed by another blow. Then a grasping for the blood-stained gold—the wages of sin. The serpent creeps forth—the moonlight touches his face. I see it—I recognize it. Eli Brand, you are the murderer!"

The wretch cowered lower, his face that of a living corpse. Again that monotonous voice fills the cave.

"I am a madman fighting for life with a huge bear. The ground is covered with blood. Both are weak, but the long knife has touched the seat of life. The man will be the victor. Not alone do I see this. Other eyes are watching the thrilling scene; the eyes of a white man. He carries a rifle. He raises it. Perhaps he fears that the bear will prove the victor. He fires. Man and beast fall to the ground. The marksman turns, and fleeing, never once looks behind him. The man and the bear lie still. There is a bullet-hole in the man's skull. First murdered in mind, now murdered in body."

"Eli Brand, that murdered man was my brother; Gospel Dick was John Richard Austin. We parted years ago, in anger, yet there was a pure, sincere love underneath all. I learned of his strange disappearance, and swore to solve the mystery. I have kept my word in part. Before this sun sets I will have kept it in every particular. Your hours, your minutes of life are numbered. Pray, if you can, for mercy hereafter; you shall receive none on earth."

"Mercy—have mercy!" gasped the trembling wretch. "I am not fit to die—spare me!"

"As you spared him—the same mercy which you measured out to my brother, that same mercy shall you receive from me—that and none other," was the cold, stern reply.

"Spare him, for my sake," faltered Edna, clinging to the arm of the avenger. "Give him time to repent."

"And you ask this—you! He coldly sold you for gold—sold you to a life of utter misery and shame!"

"I have called him father—he is not all bad. Do not destroy his soul as well as his body. Give him one more chance!"

"I will repent—yes, I'll repent," whined Eli Brand, licking his parched, cracked and bleeding lips.

"I would do much for you, little one," said Old Business, in a low, more gentle tone. "But not this. If an angel from heaven were to descend and plead with me for yonder craven's life, even though he offered me absolution for all my sins, even though he threatened me with eternal damnation for refusing, I would say to him, as I say to you, this man shall die—die by my hands, this very night!"

"Then good by, and forever! Spare him, and I will love you; murder him, and I shall hate you—loathe and despise you!" cried Edna, her eyes flashing.

"Don't say that!" and the trailer shrunk back as though dealt a bitter blow. "You don't know what you're saying. Edna, darling, I am your father!"

But the maiden shrunk back into Mark's arms, as though terrified.

With a bitter groan, the trailer bowed his head upon his hands.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 296.)

Nick Whiffles' Pet:

OR,
NED HAZEL, THE BOY TRAPPER.

BY CAPT. J. F. C. ADAMS.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE WOODS.

At this critical juncture, a shadowy arm passed over the shoulder of Ned Mackintosh, and grasped his rifle in such a manner that when the trigger was pressed, the hammer fell upon the trigger fingers instead of the percussion.

"What do you mean?" demanded the excited young man, turning angrily upon Whiffles; "are you a friend of that red demon's?"

"Easy; I've been watching the varmint, Ned, and, if there was any danger of his harmin' a hair of her head, my ball would have been ahead of yours; but, he's only done to scare her; he thinks too much of her to want to lose her by his own foolishness. Look ag'in and tell me what you see."

Casting his eyes in the direction of the lodge, the lover saw that Red Bear had retreated and seated himself again—another proof of the superior sagacity of the old trapper.

"Here's your pencil and your paper; take 'em and git out of this, fur it ain't safe to trust you here. I'll take yer place."

Ned did as commanded, withdrawing deep into the woods, where he was certain of being beyond the sight and hearing of friends and enemies alike. He held in his hand a letter from Miona, and he was determined to read it, even though he was compelled to risk not a little in doing so.

Reaching a spot where he felt all was secure, he crouched down upon the ground, like a man engaged in doing a guilty thing, and cautiously raked some dry leaves together. Upon these he spread a number of dead twigs, and then drawing forth his match-safe struck and touched a light to them.

As the twig blaze flamed up, he looked furtively around; but he was in a sort of hollow and dense undergrowth which inclosed him on every side, and leaning over the blaze, he eagerly devoured the hastily written lines.

"DEAREST EDWARD: What you and Nick Whiffles do, must be done to-night, for I am to be taken back to the village to-morrow, where I will be more closely guarded than my poor father was four years ago. I have been expecting you, knowing that you must have escaped, thinking your love would have hastened your movements more than they have; and when I was taken here, I was really in despair, for I thought you would never find me. I am more glad than I can tell you that you are so near me, and I hope soon to be with you, and clasped in the arms of father and mother, who, you said, were going to cross the ocean with you. I shall wait and listen for some signal from Nick, and be ready to perform my part in ending this dreadful captivity, that becomes worse and worse each day."

Then followed some very loving manifestations, and it closed with a prayer and the signature, "Thine Own."

The Phantom Princess, during the years spent in the wilds of America, had not forgotten her duty to her child, and so it came to pass that she expressed herself with as much fluency upon paper as she did in conversation, and Ned Mackintosh, in his romantic love for her, at times fancied that she still excelled him in her literary knowledge.

The precious letter was carefully read over, and the tiny fire was hastily stamped out and all was darkness again.

"I shall have to let Nick know what I have been doing," he soliloquized, as he walked away, "for he must be made to understand that it won't do to wait till to-morrow before moving further in this case."

He heard nothing from the other lodge in which the light shone, but, as he carefully made his way to where Nick was still acting the part of guardian, he caught the glimpse of a moving figure in front of Miona's cabin, and he instantly inquired of Nick what it meant.

"Red Bear has just left to go to the other cabin. I think he's goin' after that old squaw to help carry the gal to the canoe."

"And we are to lie here and look on?"

The trapper replied to this question by uttering a low whistle, which instantly caught the listening ear of Miona. She threw a sort of blanket around her shoulders, started to her feet and came to the entrance of the lodge, looking around in the darkness for some other aiding signal.

The whistle was repeated, and the next moment she came hurrying across the clearing, and immediately after was with her friends.

The time was critical, but Ned Mackintosh took the slight figure in his stout arms and pressed her fervently to him, kissing her face again and again, and murmured:

"Miona, my own, I have you at last, and no power on earth shall separate us again."

She could only sob and murmur her love in return, while Nick couldn't see the necessity of either just then.

"There! there! that 'll do," said he; "wait till we git where the varmints are a little more scarce than here."

Mackintosh released the girl from his embrace, but still fondly holding one hand in his own, turned to the old trapper and said:

"Lead the way, Nick, and we will follow."

Back again across the clearing the three shadowy figures stealthily made their way, while Calamity, like the pointer of a hunter, trotted in advance.

Just within the cover of the wood, Whiffles paused a moment, and touching the shoulder of Mackintosh pointed to the lodge they had just left. Following the direction of his finger, the two saw Red Bear and his mother hurrying toward the building, with the intention of taking the "queen" forcibly to the village.

Time was precious, and without waiting another moment, the three groped through the wood until they reached the edge of the creek, where the canoe lay. Noiselessly and speedily they took their seats in this, and Nick pushed out into the stream.

Instead of turning the prow downward toward Elk River, he continued on up the creek, several powerful strokes of his paddle sending the boat directly by the lodges, and on into the gloom beyond.

This was barely accomplished when a couple of quick whoops announced that the flight of Miona had been discovered, and the hurried search had already begun. With the signal of alarm, the girl shrunk closer to the side of her lover, as if she felt that there was now her only safety.

"Have no fear," he whispered, as he gathered his arm about her; "they shall never, never take you from me."

"I know it," she replied, her heart full of a delight which had only come to her dreamily and vaguely during the past years.

Nick Whiffles' whole attention was given to the management of the boat, which he sent forward with astonishing power and speed. It was observable that the creek was narrowing, and the current was growing more rapid as they advanced. Only a few miles more could the water be turned to account. The

hasn't much education in the English language."

"That is unnecessary," replied the trapper; "he'll know what it means the very minute he sets eye on it, and he'll know that me and Ned have run away with you."

"But he will not suspect we have taken this direction," replied Mackintosh.

"He won't know it, but he'll see it, and as like as not he's fellerin' hard after us this very minute."

"Let him follow!" exclaimed Mackintosh. "If he catches us, are we powerless to help ourselves? For my part I can't help believing I would experience a genuine pleasure in using that treacherous scamp as a target. Why was he fool enough to leave Miona alone, when it was so easy for her to slip out and make off?"

"He wouldn't have done it if he had known we war about, and she wouldn't have run away if she hadn't known we was."

Now and then Nick paused in his paddling for a few seconds and listened, but nothing of that reached their ears was that of the wind blowing through the trees around them.

The three noticed that quite a breeze was blowing, and that it was irregular and increasing. The faint moon, too, was obscured by flying clouds, and there was every indication of a rapidly approaching storm. The air was quite chilly, and Nick declared that a drenching, driving rain would be upon them by day-break.

"Will that be favorable or unfavorable to us?" asked Ned.

"It will be the worst thing in the world, for we've got to stop 'till the storm ends, and that'll give the varmints the time they want to find where we've gone, and the chances are they'll overhaul us afore we kin git across to the other stream."

"But we are leaving no trail."

"That don't make no difference; just as soon as they'll know we've headed toward the north, they'll know what p'int I'm aimin' fur, and they'll know how to head us off."

"Then we can turn back and take another direction."

Nick made no reply, for he did not wish to alarm his companions, but the course proposed by Mackintosh was the very one he wished to avoid. Turned back into the country again, with a band of Blackfeet between him and British territory, it would be almost impossible to escape discovery or recapture by these bloodhounds, who would watch every avenue of escape, and close around the three, with a celerity and certainty almost impossible to thwart.

Nick Whiffles knew another thing that was not especially pleasant to him, although no reference to it had yet escaped his lips, and it was certain that it would never be learned by any others through him.

His position toward Woo-wol-na was in one respect an anomalous one. The gratitude which that chief still retained for services done many years before, was such as to cause him to overlook the part he had acted in the rescue of Hugh Bandman from death; but, in forgetting that, the forbearance of the Blackfoot leader had reached its utmost limit. It was certain he would discover the part played by Nick in this business, which was far more serious in every respect.

For helping in the abduction of Miona, Woo-wol-na had no forgiveness, and none would be more ready or eager than he to take swift and sure vengeance upon the old trapper for it. In case Nick should succeed, he would be compelled to change the location of his "home" to some point where he would be safe beyond the vengeance of his enemies, who, infuriated by their disappointment, would burn the old cabin to the ground.

All this Nick fully understood, and there was a certain sadness in the thought; but, at the same time, it did not abate his energy for his friends in the least. He had gone into this business, fully understanding the risks involved, and yet had done so, not willingly only, but with an eagerness to benefit those he loved so well, and to do an act of humanity, which his conscience told him was right.

Some three or four miles were passed, and then the creek became so narrow, and the current so rapid, that further progress in the canoe was out of the question. It was therefore run against the bank, and the three disembarked.

"Now, if I leave the boat here, the varmints will be sure to find it," said Nick, "and it'll show 'em just where to take our trail."

"Take it with us, for you will need it at the other stream," said Mackintosh, stooping down to lift it from the water.

"No," replied the trapper "I don't need it fur that. I s'pose I got a dozen boats in the different streams around the country, and if we kin only make that creek, I know where to put my hand on what I want. This boat is quite handy to carry with us, but I'll take it part way, so that it shan't help them any."

With which he lifted it over his head, and strode off through the woods, the lovers following, and Calamity in advance of all.

There could no longer be any doubt that a storm was rapidly gathering and would soon break upon them. The dim light of the moon was so obscured by the tumultuous clouds constantly sweeping past its face, that they made their way with considerable difficulty through the wood and over the broken country. Mackintosh noticed that the ground was rising so rapidly that they were ascending quite an elevation, perhaps some high ridge that was the watershed of this section.

All at once, the wind increased to a gale, and several large drops of water struck the face of Mackintosh. Nick Whiffles made a sudden dive to the right, and plunged beneath an oak of dense growth, and beside which a large rock was discovered.

"That's the best we kin do," he called out, his voice hardly audible in the roaring wind; "back up ag'in it."

The lovers placed themselves against the rock, and the blanket of Mackintosh covered both. Then the trapper, by some skillful maneuvering, managed to make a sort of roof with the canoe, and thus a respectable shelter was improvised.

By this time, the storm was fairly upon them, the trees were swaying in the blast, and the great oak itself seemed as if it were about to be torn up by the roots and hurled like its own leaves through the air. The rain came driving, almost horizontally, with the fury of a thousand mitrailleuses, while an impenetrable blackness wrapped earth and sky in its gloomy pall.

What seemed strange, there was scarcely any thunder or lightning. Away off on the borders of the horizon, a few faint flashes were seen, and these were followed by the distant rumble of thunder; but it was only for a few minutes, and of scarcely power to attract notice in the fury of the rain itself.

The swirl of the wind and rain was so great, that for a time, none of the three persons cowering under the shelter of the tree, the canoe, the rock, and their blankets, attempted to exchange a word with each other. Miona shrunk closer to her lover, who pressed her to his side, as if he was never to permit her to leave him again, while Nick stood grim, thoughtful, and vigilant, with Calamity crouching between his feet.

For two hours the storm raged with unabated violence, and then it ceased as suddenly as it had begun. The fall of rain was suddenly cut short, the wind after a few puffs, died away, and it was all over.

It had scarcely ended, when all three noticed an increasing light in the sky.

"The moon is coming out again," said Mackintosh.

"It's the sun coming up," replied Nick; "day is breaking."

"What a relief after this dreadful darkness!" exclaimed Miona; "how glad I am!"

"You'd better be sorry," replied Nick, "that we haven't another night just beginnin'." We ain't ten miles from the lodges, and there's no tellin' how near a dozen of the varmints are to us."

He said no more, but he might have added that there was a conviction upon him that the real danger of the undertaking had just begun, and that a terrible experience was to come upon them in the next few hours.

CHAPTER XI. THE SIGNAL FIRES.

The light rapidly increased, and the fugitives were soon able to gain some idea of their situation. They found they were ascending a gradually-sloping ridge, several hundred feet in height, and were yet quite a distance from the top.

Deeming it useless to carry the canoe any further, Nick left it where it had served the purpose of sheltering them, and they resumed their flight without delay. All three were hungry, and had no more food in their possession; but the trapper was desirous of reaching the top of the ridge before halting for breakfast.

Miona felt the need of sustenance, but she was not the one to make her need known in the presence of danger, and she walked along cheerily and bravely, in the same hopeful spirits as her lover, who seemed never weary of looking upon and admiring her beauty. This was the first time he had seen her in the glare of sunlight since the long years ago, when he had met her like a wood-nymph, while visiting his traps in the wood, and he looked upon her with that fond, loving look born of pure, deep affection, and which was returned by her own lustrous eyes.

Her dress was almost entirely Indian in its character, and yet arranged with a taste that set off her beauty, perhaps, to greater advantage than a civilized costume would have done.

Although the shadow of a great danger constantly hung over them, yet they forgot it for the time in the pleasure of each other's society, and they chatted, and laughed, and talked of the past, the present and the future, as though there never was to be anything but sunshine, and love, and happiness for them.

"Let 'em talk—let 'em talk," mused the old trapper, as he occasionally glanced at them; "it would be a condemned pity if I should stop 'em, for there's no tellin' how soon they'll have to hush, anyway. I only wish we had a dozen hours of darkness afore us; I think I could feel that way."

While communing with himself, he was constantly looking before, behind, and all around him, as though in the momentary expectation of some great danger.

"This rain has wiped out our trail," he added, "but it's 'bout sartin' that that Red Bear knows where we've started fur, and if he ain't close behind us, like 'nough he's on ahead somewhere."

At the end of half an hour they were at the summit of the ridge, and they took the leisure to look about them. Their view to the rear was so extensive that they could trace the creek up which they had ascended for a long distance, on its winding way through the woods. Nick even indicated the point where were the ruins of the Blackfoot village, although the woods at this point were so dense that the view was indistinct and unsatisfactory.

Long and intently the three scanned the intervening stretch of forest and broken country, seeking to catch some glimpse of their enemies, but none were able to discover the first indications of pursuit.

"It ain't no sign they ain't follerin' us," remarked Nick, after the failure of their scrutiny, "for the varmints ar' cummin' and could dodge into cover and watch us all day without our gettin' sight of one of thar top-knots."

Turning to the north, a pleasant scene was spread out before them. The ridge sloped away as gradually in that direction as in the other, while about ten miles distant rose another ridge almost precisely similar to the one upon which they were standing. Between these two spread out a low, beautiful valley, through which several streams meandered; the whole country was covered with wood, although it was more scattered in some places than in others, and at certain points the grounds were rocky and rugged.

Looking away to the north, the same valley could be traced until wood and stream grew indistinct and mingled with the hazy blue of the horizon.

Across the intervening tract of territory—some ten miles in extent, as has been shown—it was necessary for the party to push their way, before they could feel warranted in enjoying any degree of safety.

"On t'other side that ridge," said Nick, "is the creek that runs into the south branch of the Saskatchewan. Ef we can once git into my canoe on that without the varmints bein' in front, I'll feel easy."

"Then let us delay no longer," said Miona. "We've got to have somethin' to eat, or we'll find a condemned difficulty in travelin'."

You see, we ain't goin' to reach t'other side much afore night, and we can't do it on empty stomachs."

"Shall we not be incurring extra danger by kindling a fire in such an elevated position?" asked Mackintosh.

"Yes," was the reply; "we must go fur 'nough down the slope to make sure they won't see us."

They descended entirely to the bottom, where Ned Mackintosh and Miona busied themselves in building a fire, while Nick, cautioning them not to wander away, set out in quest of their breakfast.

The trapper's usual luck did not attend him this time. After hunting for a long time without getting a shot, he lost all patience, and producing the line that he always carried with him, cast it into the nearest stream. Here, in a few minutes, he hauled out several plump fish, which he quickly gathered up and

carried back to camp, where his friends were anxiously expecting him.

The fire had been replenished several times, and it required but a few minutes more for the preparation of their morning meal. All were very hungry, and when they had finished their repast, it was found that there was none at all left to take away with them against the return of hunger.

But they could well afford to wait twenty-four hours, and Nick declared that they must think no more of food until they were out of this dangerous valley, and safe on the other side of the ridge.

"By mighty!" he exclaimed, looking up to the sky, "I don't know where the day has gone, but it's blamed near noon this minute."

It seemed impossible to believe this declaration, but a glance at the sun showed that he was not far from the truth, and the three hurried forward upon their journey, like persons guilty of some great dereliction of duty for which they were anxious to atone.

The ground was found to be very uneven, so that it was impossible to make any sort of progress such as they desired; but they pressed steadily on until the afternoon was well advanced, when an unexpected obstacle presented itself.

While leading the way, Nick Whiffles suddenly found himself upon the bank of a rushing torrent too broad to leap over, and too deep to think of wading. He paused in amazement for a few seconds, not understanding what it meant, as he had not noticed this stream when standing upon the ridge in the morning; but a moment's reflection told him it was all very natural, being caused by the heavy fall of rain in the night, and which had not time to gather until after the whites were down the slope and into the valley.

What was to be done? was the involuntary question that rose to the lips of all, as they stood on the bank of the rushing, muddy torrent, and felt that some means must be devised for reaching the other side.

"It has risen very suddenly," said Miona; "why can we not wait till it subsides again?" "It won't do it afore to-morrow," replied Nick; "we must get over somehow or other. If we can't do it here, we must find a spot where we kin."

There was reason to hope that there was some place where this could be accomplished in safety, and the three began searching along the bank for such a point.

This consumed more precious time, and with a feeling of alarm that it would be difficult to depict, they saw the afternoon drawing to a close, while no more than half the distance across the valley was passed.

Finally a projecting rock was discovered, from the edge of which it seemed possible to make the leap.

"I think that'll answer," said Nick, as he carefully measured the distance with his eye. "I've jumped further when I was younger, but the difficulty, you see, is with the gal."

"Am I the only trouble?" asked Miona.

"That's it—hulloa!"

As the exclamation escaped the trapper, Miona made a light leap as though she intended to spring into the water, but instead she landed as lightly as a fawn upon the opposite bank, leaving quite a space between where her feet struck and the edge of the stream.

An exclamation of surprise escaped from the two she had left upon the other side, and she looked saucily back and called out: "Beat that if you can!"

Calamity made a slight run and jumped with might and main, his feet striking in the footprints of the girl.

Nick followed, landing a little short.

Calamity looked at his friends a moment, and then turned about, as though he considered such a performance too undignified for him, and then stepping into the torrent began swimming his way over.

The current was so rapid that it was a work of extreme difficulty for him, but he struggled bravely and succeeded in making the other shore, although he was carried quite a distance down-stream.

But the passage was safely made, and all were considerably elated thereat. In searching for this point they had been forced quite a distance up-stream and not a little out of their way; but still the long, elevated ridge stretched out across their path, and all they had to do was to reach and pass that. On the other side flowed the stream, which they believed was to bear them into a haven of safety. There were still a goodly number of miles before them, and it was impossible to cross the ridge before night should set in, but if there were no Blackfeet close in their rear, there was reason to hope for a safe deliverance.

They had been over the stream but a few minutes, and were picking their way carefully along, when Calamity showed so much uneasiness that it attracted the attention of all. He whined now and then, and elevating his head sniffed the air in a way which showed he sensed danger.

Nick Whiffles did not check his speed until they had gone some distance further, where he walked to the top of a rock to make his observation, his two friends following him.

First he looked to the ridge which they had crossed, and, as he did so, he was seen to start and heard to utter "By mighty!"

Both Mackintosh and Miona gazed in the same direction; but, although both were gifted with a keen eyesight, and both had an extensive experience in wood craft, they failed to discover the exciting cause of his alarm.

The trapper stood for perhaps three minutes looking intently and unwaveringly at the ridge, and then he turned square about and looked the other way.

"By mighty!" was the expression that escaped him, with more emphasis than before, and then he looked back and forth from one ridge to another.

Very naturally his companions began to feel some concern at his manner, and Miona inquired what it meant.

"Look yonder!" he replied, pointing to the ridge on the left, "and tell me whether you see any thing."

"We have been looking in both directions," replied Mackintosh, "and can not divine what it is."

Nick now indicated the precise point and added:

"Don't look among the trees, but above 'em."

"Ah! a camp-fire!" exclaimed Ned.

"No; it ain't—it's a signal-fire!" corrected Nick.

Just the faintest, dimmest outlines of a column of smoke could be seen rising through the tree-tops on the opposite ridge; and, while carefully scanning it, Ned observed that it did not ascend in a straight line, as it would have done from a stationary fire, but that it waved from side to side, in a serpentine manner, showing that the flame which caused it was regularly changed from one spot to another.

"How is that?" inquired Ned, after remarking this peculiar appearance, "I do not understand it."

"I've seen that thing afore," replied Nick, almost sullenly; "one of the varmints is in the top of the tree with a torch in his hand. Now, take a look at t'other ridge."

This was done, and precisely the same thing was seen upon the summit of that.

There must be an Indian in one of these trees, too!"

Yes; and a whole pack of 'em at the bottom, too; they've been watchin' us all the afternoon and signaling to each other. They know just where we are this minute, and they're putting things in shape to gobble us."

Nick seemed in a more despondent mood than either of his companions had noticed since starting, and they naturally partook of his mental depression.

He chafed at the remembrance of his delay in getting across this ten-mile valley. Here the better part of a day had been spent in wandering about in full view of their enemies, and there was no possibility now of deceiving them as to their movements.

They could only wait until darkness closed about them, and then attempt to steal over the ridge without being discovered. There was a possibility of this, but Nick Whiffles was satisfied in his own mind that Red Bear and others were closer to them than his companions suspected.

The infuriated Blackfoot had not concluded to wait until night, but was doubtless stealing through the wood after them.

What meant the uneasiness of Calamity, but the danger was close at hand? Remarkable as was the sagacity of the canine, his master knew that he had not seen, or having seen, did not understand, the meaning of the signal-fires in the distance.

There was something else that alarmed him. It was in the woods, close about them.

"What is it, pup?" asked Nick, as he retreated from his exposed position upon the rock; "do you smell varmints?"

There was nothing particularly noticeable in his reply, but it was of such a character that his master grasped his rifle more firmly, and said in a low tone to Mackintosh:

"Be ready for the varmints any minute."

"I am ready," replied Ned, feeling in his breast-pocket to make sure his revolver was there. "It is getting dark, and if we can keep out of their way until night, I have hopes of giving them the slip."

"If we hadn't got hindered so in crossin' this blamed place, there'd be a better chance for us, but it's going to be the condemnedest difficulty we ever was in afore."

Nick Whiffles did not forget that his companions had not slept a wink upon the preceding night, unless they might have snatched a few minutes when in the canoe, and he had the strongest doubts of their ability to stand the strain to which they would be subjected through the coming darkness.

But there was a present danger which now required all his thoughts, and he led his friends stealthily and slowly through the wood, so as to escape the observation of any who were stationed on an elevated look-out.

Suddenly Calamity gave such unmistakable evidence of uneasiness that all paused, feeling that the danger was so close at hand that there was no need of attempting to proceed further.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 295.)

"FOR THE BLOOD IS THE LIFE."

See Deuteronomy, xii: 23. The blood being the source from which the system is built up, and from which derive our mental as well as physical capabilities, how important that it should be kept pure! If it contain vile, festering poisons, all organic functions become enfeebled. Settling upon important organs, as the lungs, liver and kidneys, the effect is most disastrous. Hence it behooves all to keep their blood in a perfectly healthy condition, and more especially does this apply to this particular season of the year than at any other. No matter what the exciting cause may be, the real cause of many of our ailments is in the blood. Now, Dr. Pierce does not wish to place his Golden Medical Discovery in the catalogue of quack patent nostrums, by recommending it to cure every disease, nor does he so recommend it, on the contrary, there are hundreds of diseases that he acknowledges it will not cure; but what he does claim is this, that there is but one form of blood disease that it will not cure, and that disease is cancer. He does not recommend his Discovery for that disease, yet he knows it to be the most searching blood-disease yet discovered, and that it will free the blood and system of all other blood-poisons, be they animal, vegetable or mineral. The Golden Medical Discovery is warranted by him to cure the worst forms of Blood Diseases, as White Swellings, Fever Sores, Hip-joint and Spinal Diseases—all of which belong to Scrofulous diseases.

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- 1

NEVER HOME IN TIME.

BY JOE JOT, JR.

When you came courting, Mr. Jones, in my young better days, you always was a punctual man, and so you won my praise; I think you always came too soon, and thought it was a crime To be one little minute late, and so you came in time.

You sought my hand; I gave it you, and blessed my happy fate. That gave a man so punctual who'd never come in late. I thought that I should surely live a life that was sublime, And ne'er be harrowed by a step that never came in time.

Sit down a moment, Mr. Jones, I have a word to speak. My object, Mr. Jones, is strong, although my voice is weak. Since that sad day I married you and heard my marriage-bells, The moment you were wanted home you then were somewhere else.

Don't start to go; sit still a bit, and do not look so grim. You see you're hastier to go than e'er you are to come.

No matter how the table's set with fruits from many a clime. It makes no difference to you, you're never home in time.

I look out of the window, and I stand out by the gate. Till I have frozen both my ears, and vowed that I would wait. Till I was frozen clear to death and laid to you the crime, And here you hung for it because you ne'er came home in time.

No matter who the visitors that happened to be about; And even when my folks are here you'll take your dinner out. And though I wait till everything is cold except my wrath, We never hear your tardy step come shuffling up the path.

Put down your hat; there, listen, sir, I've got a word to say. I'm pretty nearly tired of this, and have been many a day. This thing has got to be dried up, let it occur once more, And I'll snatch you baldier-headed than you ever were before.

I've got my dander up now, Jones, and my foot I will put down. And I intend to make of you the earliest man in town.

If you're ever late again now, Jones, you over the coals I'll haul, And if you're late the second time you needn't come at all.

A Dangerous Experiment.

BY JENNIE DAVIS BURTON.

HALF a dozen skaters were darting hither and thither in mazy evolutions, while one level-headed comrade whirled in the slow time of a dreamy ice-waltz, and the rest of the party strolled as idle spectators on the shore.

"Beauty crowned with a thunder-cloud!" said Arch Lewis, with a gesture indicating a figure which stood apart. The simile was not inapt, for a black burnoose worn over her head and shoulders, fell like dusky drapery in which was set a singularly striking face. Purest oval and clearest olive, with a short curve of scarlet lip, and jetty curling lashes shading the lustrous southern eyes that were deep and dark with a passionate melancholy as she gazed across the pale northern scene spreading away under an opal-tinted sky, the steely glitter of the ice-bound river; the tall trees lifting their skeleton tracery of twig and limb against the luminous atmosphere, making a fair picture even to the weary eyes of Vivia d'Arcier.

Arch's companion made no remark, but presently he approached her deferentially. "You would find this more entrancing if your heart were not among the roses of the south, Miss d'Arcier."

"Are you a magician that you should read my thoughts, Mr. Lisle? I can't get over my longing for home, but I trust I am not so ungrateful as to intrude my moods upon the rest. I must mend my manners if I have been so rude."

"Why not give the privilege of sympathy with your moods?" She looked at him askance, then turned to regard the skaters, answering lightly:

"They are too changeable. I would not inflict the pence of following them upon the most hardened sinner here, and that is Mr. Foster. Do see how he is exerting himself to win poor Beth Lewis's heart away."

"Poor Beth, indeed!" cried Arch, indignantly, as he came up. "Miss d'Arcier, I will not permit any charitable railing of the reprehensible deeds of that young person, if she is my sister. It is as natural for Beth to flirt as to breathe, but there is no earthly excuse for her keeping that wretched Fos. dangling miserably on her string. I give you my word that she has made him propose to her three times in as many months and refused him every time. Did you ever hear of anything more diabolical?"

"He will not think it so when final acceptance rewards his persistence."

"Will it, though? Ah, if persistence always wins, I shall take heart again," pointedly, in undertone confidence.

The beautiful, proud face froze into coolest indifference, and Arch was glad when a skate strap slipped its fastening, bringing the waltz to an abrupt termination near them. The laughter and badinage attending the slight disaster covered his chagrin.

"Aren't you dizzy, Beth?" asked Beth's bosom friend, Kitty Holme. "I am, from watching you."

"Not a bit of it. Too bad we had to stop so. It was like heaven, like a hashish dream, floating, floating, so light and uplifted, almost as if one were treading on air."

"What do you know about hashish, Miss Beth?"

"I know all about it. I took some once; now, Arch, you needn't look so shocked at the fact! It was long ago, more's the pity. It's glorious, just that. Are we going to finish our waltz, Fos?" Very free and easy was Miss Beth with this devoted cavalier of hers.

"No," said her brother, decidedly. "I am not going to have you break your neck after one warning, while I am by to prevent it. Time we were going back, I say."

"Oh, well, when my affectionate brother takes that tone," sighed Beth, resignedly. "Say, Arch, what are you so short about all at once? You ought to try hashish. It would waft you into such a state of beatitude that I would have a little respite. Respite, respite, and repentance!" she quoted, taking a dramatic attitude.

"Mine the respite, and yours the repentance. It would do you no harm." She flashed a meaning glance from him toward Miss d'Arcier. "She suspects I made a fool of myself there," thought Arch, and began making himself agreeable to Kitty Holme, while Beth rattled on. "Aren't you sorry you weren't with us, Vivia? Skating is a

splendid exhilarant, and you look like an iceberg."

"Feeling like an iceberg is my normal condition, I believe."

"How dolefully she says it! You wouldn't suppose, Mr. Lisle, that she can excel all of us, but it's the truth. She isn't unfeeling, only indolent. Be pitiful, and cut out that tiresome Fos. for the walk home," the last in a whisper so appealing that Norman Lisle could not resist it. Beth rewarded him by talking of Vivia d'Arcier all the way.

"That pride of hers will be the ruin of her," cried the outspoken little lady, emphatically. "I wouldn't be her, with all her beauty and all her fortune for the world. You see, people don't understand her, and without meaning it, she will repel the one that loves her best with that haughty reserve which is natural to her. I know."

She stole a glance at him, but his inscrutable face baffled any inquisitive designs she may have had upon it. She might shrewdly guess his position toward her friend, but Mr. Lisle's heart was by no means an open page for those who chose to read.

There was a vast, old-fashioned, well-ceiled room in the vast, old-fashioned, steep-roofed house where they were all staying, which the three girls occupied in common. A couple of beds stood in the diagonal corners; there was a big black bureau and wardrobe, and tables and chairs islanding the sea of polished floor, and Kitty Holme, who was first to reach there, stood, with both hands clasping her head, looking distressed, as the other two came in.

"I believe I have the neuralgia," she said. "There's a sharp, darting pain all through my head. I might have known what would come of wearing that flimsy cloud. Ma always said it was no protection against the wind."

"But you look sweet in it, Kitty. I'll tell you; take morphia. It will relieve the pain, and make your eye bright in the bargain. I'll bring it from the medicine chest."

"What a pity these things hurt one," she said, as she came back with the bottle in her hand. "If you have an obdurate lover you want to conquer, you had better do it to-night, Kit. Take just enough to make you brilliant and altogether lovely. I wish I dared, but I know myself too well to risk it. I'd be an opium-eater for life if I ever allowed myself to tamper with it."

"I'm not afraid. How much do you take?" "People begin with from an eighth to a third of a grain, but you'll want more for the pain. Let me put out about what will give you the proper degree of excitement. See, this is the way you measure it. Hashish is safer handling, and has a happier effect." She lifted the snowy powder upon the point of a tiny penknife and crushed it on a bit of paper, separating the quantity desired carefully. Miss d'Arcier was silently observant.

"I thought it was narcotic," said Kitty, growing a trifle nervous. "So it is, but there is a stimulated, trance-like state which lasts sometimes for hours before the sleepiness comes on; longer with beginners than habitual users of the drug. You remember Dell Trent, don't you?"

"Perfectly. How I used to envy her in the evenings, and pity her next morning. Such a miserable object as she was then." "Well, she had all sorts of delightful visions that one might risk 'next morning' for if it only stopped there. The trouble is one's pretty sure to take too big a dose in the end."

Later, the same gay young party who had been upon the river met beneath the parlor lamp-light. There was a dreamy, yet shining light in Kitty's eyes, and the soft laugh rippling often from her lips was pleasant to hear. Vivia d'Arcier watched her covertly; herself always quiet, she was even more quiet than usual now, and presently she was missing from their midst, and only Norman Lisle saw the dusky shape flit out into the moonlit night. He made an excuse and followed, but it was some time before he discovered her in a remote walk which wound amid tall shrubs and evergreens, and when he did, he stopped short in unutterable wonder and amazement.

A light snowfall was crusted upon the frozen earth, and the full moon riding high with a trail of fleecy cloud in her wake shed an ivory luster on the scene. Vivia, with perfect face uplifted, was circling all alone, light as a spirit, singing softly the measure of her eerie dance. In his astonishment, Lisle hesitated, not knowing whether to advance or withdraw, but the crunching of the snow beneath his feet reached her ear and decided the matter. She stood still, with a ringing silvery laugh as he drew near.

"I know I have shocked you," she said, with a naive charm as it was unusual with her; "but the moon affects me like other lunatics. What a perfect night! Mere commonplace skating in daylight has no charm, but I was thinking how different it would be to glide over yonder river of crystal running through frosted fairyland. It's safe, of course?"

"Of course," he echoed. "It was thoroughly tested this afternoon. Will you take me for your escort and go?"

"Yes; if you get the skates."

"I'll have them, by fair means or by foul," in mock-heroic tones.

"Don't tell any one, please."

"To hear is to obey. Have you wraps enough?"

"Plenty." He darted toward the house too elated at the prospect of securing her alone to himself to puzzle much over this unaccountable freak, the wonderful change in her. He was back soon, and they went down the slope leading to the river, Vivia talking with that unwonted vivacity all the way. There was a flush rising in her cheeks, and a streaming, brilliant light in those magnificent eyes, glancing at him restlessly, that woke undefinable misgivings in Norman's mind.

He put the skates on the little arched feet, encased in distracting boots, that had a share in her unrest, for they carried her with smooth, undulating motion over the glittering surface, but not out of easy ear-shot until he had secured his own skates and turned toward her. "Ready. Which direction do you prefer to take, Miss d'Arcier?"

With no reply but her gay laugh she was already off, the sharp ring and bright flash of the steel cutting through the evening air. There was nothing for Mr. Lisle to do but to accept the implied challenge. He was not so well-skilled in the art as he could have wished, and after a minute dropped into steady, even strokes, that left the slender skate flying far in advance. He thought the perverse influence prompting her would change, and it seemed so as she slackened her speed and allowed him to gain upon her.

"It makes one wish one were an angel flying through space, doesn't it? But then, according to Laplace's theory, floating atoms made up the world, and the rule holds good yet; we would only be drawn down to dull earth again. Ah, I forgot! angels are spiritualized creations. Now, suppose we could

evade the law of gravitation, and go mounting a 'stair of stars.' No, Mr. Lisle! I am not to be so easily caught. I am Will-o'-the-wisp, and you are to follow, follow, follow."

What a shock of absolute terror ran through Norman's frame. Had she gone mad? He blamed himself bitterly for letting it escape him thus long that she was not herself. A cold moisture broke out upon his forehead; he stopped stock still to reflect, hoping a little that she might return. A futile hope, for the flying figure passed a bend and was lost to view, but her clear voice lifted in song echoed back. His face settled into a white, intense, resolute expression, as he started again in pursuit. There followed a chase which seemed to him more unreal than that it ever did in the time afterward, when he had only to shut his eyes to bring up a vivid picture of the wide white slope rising on either side, of the glittering transparency winding ribbon-like through it, over which that tantalizing young creature flashed like a veritable Will-o'-the-wisp, giving him glimpses now and then of her crimson cheeks and wild bright eyes, while the sweet voice rung out in an unnatural mirth which made him shudder.

Neither saw how that fleecy trail of cloud had spread and darkened, neither felt the rising gale which came in bitter sweeps from the low, distant hilltops. His every nerve was strained in that exciting race, and he was gaining slowly and steadily, gaining faster and faster, for her factitious energy was dying out, drawing close, when a mass of those blackening clouds was driven across the moon's calm face and an somber darkness closed upon the scene below. In his eagerness Lisle pressed on, then his foot struck some foreign substance imbedded in the ice, and the shock spun him around in a dizzy whirl that ended in a fall.

He was stunned for a moment, and when he regained sight and sense she was kneeling beside him, shivering, and seeming with a dragging effort of will to slowly recover herself.

"Oh, what have I done? Are you hurt; can't you get up? I did not mean it—I did not, indeed."

He made an effort to raise himself, but sunk back and set his white lips hard. He clasped a fold of her mantle, determined she should not escape him again, and after a few seconds spoke in a voice which he vainly tried to render natural.

"Don't be alarmed; I have broken my leg, I think."

She seemed to hear without taking in the full meaning of his words. She passed her hand over her forehead, and said dreamily:

"Then we can't go back. I'm glad of it, for I am tired. I'd like to go to sleep if it were not so cold."

A suspicion, vague at first, gained ground in his mind.

"Miss d'Arcier—Vivia, what have you done? What have you taken? Tell me instantly." She evaded the question, laughing nervously, but he repeated it, and his impelling glance drew a reluctant reply.

"Morphia. It don't affect me like most people; it gives me wild fancies; but Beth's talk possessed me to take it. I'm sorry for you; I'm over it now."

The sweet, slow tones thrilled him with a fear greater than her previous excitement had done, and a groan which his own almost intolerable pain had not wrung from him crossed his lips.

"Vivia, rouse yourself. It is certain death to yield to lassitude now. Everything depends upon you. We will both freeze here unless you get help."

But the lethargy of the opium-trance held her; she made an effort to comprehend and obey him as he explained their danger and implored her to arouse; but she had no energy left, and no care for any future.

"Talk to me, Vivia. Are you cold?"

"No; deliciously warm, and oh! so calm. This is peace, this is love."

Her last word inspired him. He had lacked courage to avow himself before, and it seemed like taking an unfair advantage to do so now, but anything would be pardonable which might bring her back to herself. He sent a daring, longing look straight up into her eyes. "My love! you shall hear me at last. I love you, Vivia. Your coldness and reserve shall not thwart my telling it now. I love you, and I know that you love me."

He found the little hidden hand and carried it passionately to his lips, thrilled and almost awed by his own presumption. The indignant pride he had thought to arouse was all dormant. She did not rebuke him. Instead she bent down until her lips touched his, murmuring very low:

"I love you, Norman. Now you know my secret. That was why I took the morphia."

"What was why?"

"To make—you—love me." It was the last direct response he could gain from her. She murmured brokenly and sunk into unconsciousness despite all his efforts.

The night grew blacker. The wind whistled shrilly through the tree-tops, and a fine, cutting sleet began to fall. He had drawn down her head to rest upon his arm, and he shielded her as best he could, but despair and cold were doing their work with Norman; his pain lessened, a sense of approaching comfort stole over him; then he gave a great start out of his momentary torpor. He thought at first his sight was deceiving him. He called out with a ringing halloo, and struggled to rise, only to sink back wrenched with renewed pain. But he continued to shout like one mad. The sound pierced Vivia's heavy slumber, and she started awake, bewildered. The power of the drug had worn itself out in that deep sleep.

"Awake!" he cried, joyously. "Not too late. See, it is a light!"

And a light it was, away at the left, twinkling like a distant star, brought out by the increasing gloom.

"How did we come here? How—" and there she stopped short, as remembrance flashed across her. He could not see her face in the stormy dimness, but he felt the change, the armor of pride resumed.

"Vivia, dear Vivia!" imploringly, and his tone said more than his words.

"Don't!" she cried, sharply. "I never can forgive myself for my folly. I don't ask you to forgive, but to forget it. And oh! don't tell any one, please," breaking down suddenly, and covering her face with a gesture eloquent of a proud woman's shame. "I was frightened, and meant to go to my room, when I found I was losing control of myself. Ah, if I had but done so. That hateful spell!"

"But for your sake I wish that heavenly spell had never broken!" He never thought of inconsistency in making the declaration. "I would rather not be saved, if I must lose you. Be kind as the Vivia of your dream; tell me why you took the morphia, and I promise not to betray you."

The memory of the past few hours, and a thought of his exposure and suffering overcame pride. By a rift of moonlight breaking through, he read the shy, awakened tenderness in the luminous Southern eyes.

"I was so weary of that icy statue, myself! I longed to come down from my lonely pedestal."

"But I will not have you trying that experiment again. It is too dangerous."

"I shall never wish to do so, Norman."

And the anxious friends of the two young people heard only of the accident and Lisle's injury, which detained them over night at a farm-house near the river. The leg was not broken after all, but a sprained ankle served for as good claim upon love's sympathy, and a wedding was the result of that midwinter night's dream.

THE RIVER'S STORY.

BY FRANK M. IMBRIE.

The sun bent down to frolic with the pebbles strewn 'long the beach, where in her dawning glow

She stood, a woman, when in dreamy languor, A child—when listening to the ebb and flow

Of warm, glad waves that shoreward turned to kiss

The we bare feet in sportive, rapturous bliss. She plucked a wave-borne, emerald-circled blossom.

A voice broke on the pebbly shore, a moon, That in the pulsing hand folds petals waxen

And golden anthers, as they outward fling Their clasped-rose odor on the still, dead air,

Cradling a ruffled heart, a touch left bare, Again the rustling willows tell their story

Of faded blooms dead in a child's soft hand; Anon, they breathe a later whisper, gathered

From murmured tones from flash of troth-plight band

And gossip to the rushes far and wide Of lovers, strolling by the river's side.

In life's maddens, with its rose-crushed fragrances

She stand and listens to the river's tone, A mournful cadence wakes the slumbering echoes,

Of wayside flowers, withering as they smile; So weird, so sad, so filled with longings wild,

That one would scarcely know her lips had smiled. "Oh, sun-bathed bowers that held the tempting

Rich promise of the royal days to come! Oh, fragile blooms of tropical aroma,

Faded, ere yet their timid life begun! Oh, heart! where now the golden threads of

Perchance you'll find, somewhere, a useful isle!

Fashioned by Love, by Fancy's fingers spun?

"Oh, sobbing river, cease to tell the story

Of wayside flowers, withering as they smile; Oh, memory! yield the Lethargic stream, a triumph

Wrap heart and brain in lotus-power the while; Anchored too fast!" Ah, poor heart broken,

Perchance you'll find, somewhere, a useful isle!

Perchance you'll find, somewhere, a useful isle!

Perchance you'll find, somewhere, a useful isle!

Perchance you'll find, somewhere, a useful isle!

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In the carriage Mr. Maynard began: "Twelve years ago I was a young man."

"You are now," interrupted Mollie. "Be silent, Miss, or I shall not tell you the story."

"I am silent," said the irrepressible. "Twelve years ago I was a young fellow,

secretary in the New York house of the firm of which I am now partner. As I had few acquaintances there, and lived in a hotel, I gladly accepted the offer of a fellow clerk, Myron Cowperthwaite, to introduce me to his sisters."

"The Cowperthwa